

WALKS TO EMMAUS



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WALKS TO EMMAUS.

BY

THE LATE REV. NEHEMIAH ADAMS, D.D.

EDITED BY HIS SON,

REV. WILLIAM H. ADAMS.

“And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the scriptures ?”—LUKE xxiv.: 32.

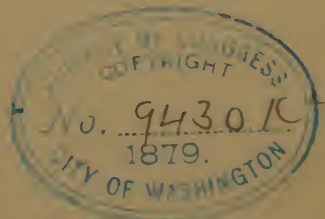
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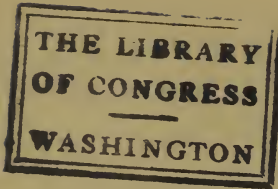


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UNTO
HIM THAT LOVED US,
AND WASHED US FROM OUR SINS
IN HIS OWN BLOOD,
AND HATH MADE US KINGS AND PRIESTS
UNTO GOD AND HIS FATHER;
TO HIM BE GLORY AND DOMINION
FOR EVER AND EVER.
AMEN.

PREFACE.

DR. JAMES HAMILTON, of London, styled the Rev. Nehemiah Adams, D. D., "The Washington Irving of Sermon Writers." Appreciative brethren in the ministry have not hesitated to term him "the ablest preacher of his day." Such eulogium he would have disclaimed. Yet testimonials from readers of his widely distributed publications concur in the encomiums of a writer noticing his volume, "The Cross In The Cell," as appropriate to them all: "The style in which the book is written, the simplicity, the felicity of expression, the inimitable aptness in quoting Scripture, the delicate touches of nature introduced into narrative and conversation, and all mellowed and flavored with the richness of the Cross of Christ, — reveal the fact that it is from the pen of the Rev. Dr. Nehemiah Adams."

His discourses are unique. Originality is a main characteristic. He quoted less than almost any modern writer. Yet he constantly suggested the conviction that his mind was stored with the thoughts of the best writers of all ages. From his mind, as a matrix, each thought issued, coined with an image and superscription entirely its own. Powerful in its naturalness, you almost blamed yourself that you had not conceived that thought. Proficient in logic, a favorite study, he was so emancipated from its technicalities as sometimes to suggest its absence; yet inexorable deductions from premises

from which there is no appeal, vindicated his independence. Rhetorically, he studied simplicity that he might make divine thoughts level with the understanding not only of the wayfar-ing man and the little child, but the invalid and the sorrowing unable to wrestle with words, yet craving heart-food. His friend, the Rev. Professor Phelps, of Andover Theological Seminary, here observes: "It is the charm of Dr. Adams's style and method in preaching, that truth fitted by its profoundness to the most thoughtful hearers is made clear to the most illiterate. Few men have adorned the American pulpit with a broader reach in adaptation to different classes of mind." His manuscripts often show that the sentences which appear the simplest were those most elaborated. His was the *ars celare artem*. Addison was, as much as any writer, his model for purity of expression. Yet he affirmed that Jeremy Taylor, whom he largely read in the theological seminary and his early ministry, pervadingly influenced his style. In his last days he remarked that were he to begin authorship again, he should pay less attention to manner of composition, except severity in the use of expletives. He enjoined his son "to take an iron-clad oath against adjectives."

But not pre-eminently even by perspicuity; Dr. Adams's style is largely characterized by play of fancy. Like sunbeams on the waters, his sanctified imagination gilds theology's great profounds. Bishop Lowth held that Hebrew poetry was not an optional mode of conveying divine truth, but the only form in which the finer shades, or peculiar reaches of inspiration could be expressed. Dr. Adams seems deliberately to have enwreathed with fancy important commonplaces, as well as obscure truths, for enforcement or rescue from neglect.

Because of his individuality as a religious writer, whereby he successfully reached the hearts of men, it has been deemed im-

portant to multiply his published discourses. His contemporaries in the ministry encouraging, the plan of this series of volumes was projected by the editor during Dr. Adams's last illness. The discourses of his entire ministry having been classified under each book of the Bible from which the texts were severally taken, the selections now published were made, Dr. Adams occasionally being physically able not only to approve the choice, but also to listen to the re-written sermon. With rare exceptions, generally of a few sermons previously published in pamphlet form, as "the Power of Christian Gratitude," preached at the meeting of the American Board of Foreign Missions, at Utica, New York, 1855, it has been requisite to transcribe each discourse. Consistently with ministerial engagements, the editor hopes to issue from time to time the five volumes which will complete this work. He must be held responsible for occasional passages where the original suggested by a few words extemporaneous thoughts, and where the manuscript was illegible; as also the captions, generally, of the discourses.

The title of the work, "Walks to Emmaus," was discovered in one of Dr. Adams's note books projecting new literary labors. His sermon on this subject will be found in "The Communion Sabbath," page 144.

While these volumes are designed as "A Christian Year," the discourses will usually be found appropriate for all Sabbaths. Instead, however, of those adapted to special occasions or anniversaries,—for example, "A New Year's Sermon," one of the fifth-Sabbath sermons may prove "a word in season," for another portion of the year. It is designed to furnish in these volumes, at least one sermon adapted to each phase of pulpit and pastoral requirement, and the needs of the soul from impenitence to final redemption.

By glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ as the Saviour of a lost world; by revealing to the awakened conscience the guilt of sin because committed against God, and offering to the sinner, "condemned already because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God," free salvation through the blood of the Lamb; by illustrating the work of the Holy Spirit in leading the sinner to his Saviour, and the believer, through sanctification, to an abundant entrance into glory; and by displaying the exceeding riches of the grace of God the Father, in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus, — may this homiletical work fulfil its author's aim, and continually prove that by it he, being dead, yet speaketh.

THE EDITOR.

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WALKS TO EMMAUS.

JANUARY.

FIRST SABBATH. MORNING.

THE UNTRIED WAY.

“For ye have not passed this way heretofore.”—JOSHUA iii: 4.

THE Israelites under Joshua had come to a new stage in their journey to the promised land. They paused three days to review the past and prepare for the coming scenes of their journey. After three days the officers went through the host, and gave them particular instructions for their march. “And they commanded the people, saying, when ye see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the priests, the Levites, bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it. Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure; come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go.” They were to cross the Jordan, and the ark of God must go before them to point the way, hence the direction to stand back from the Ark, and let it advance so far that it might be in sight of the host. The reason assigned for this precaution and for these particular directions was this: “*For ye have not passed this way heretofore.*” Notwithstanding their great experiences for forty

years from Egypt, they were now in circumstances which had never happened before. "Ye have not passed this way heretofore."

Life is not a circle, however similar many of our circumstances may be from year to year. It is an onward march. No doubt many things in our condition and experience will be precisely the same this year as the last, and yet as we stand upon the threshold of this new year, it may be said to us with truth and as a matter of solemn interest, ye have not passed this way heretofore.

I shall first illustrate the following truth :

Our life is a succession of new and important influences.

We are to meet this year with new events. Things which never happened to us before will occur to us this year. Even those things which may seem to be a repetition of former events will not be the same, but under circumstances and with an experience entirely new. If we should meet with prosperity it will be with a freshness and vividness that will make it in its effect upon us, new. If death comes to our circles, it will touch our heart-strings which have never felt his icy finger, or make those which have already quivered feel new sensations. Things wholly new in our experience will occur, and as we go through them, we shall often be at a loss in seeking direction from our past experience. As we wake each morning we behold

a new day: the sun has risen for nearly six thousand years, but as at each time of his rising, he has made an entirely new day, so we shall continually meet during this year with new and untried occurrences, of which as we go through them it may be said to us, Ye have not passed this way heretofore.

We are this year to be placed in new situations.

As we live in a changing world we must necessarily partake of its changing influences. If we are in sorrow now, we shall meet with things which will retrieve or absorb our sorrow. If we are happy, new accessions may be made to our happiness, or days of darkness may come over us. This experience will be in such sense new, as to require new and peculiar help and grace from God. We may be placed in new relations to others. Changes affecting our whole lives may occur to us this year. We may occupy new places, or be thrown into circumstances in our present conditions and situations which will verify the words of the text.

As no place or condition is free from temptation with a change of circumstances we must expect new trials. That proneness to evil which is in us will be excited by new events. If we are prospered we shall walk amid snares. If we are depressed we shall walk over pitfalls. If we grow rich we shall be tempted to forget God, and if we are poor, or become so, if we do not steal or de-

fraud, we shall be tempted with murmuring and the various liabilities connected with a hard lot. It may be, and it is altogether probable, that we shall be exposed to temptations that will cost as hard a struggle as any that we have encountered. We shall feel that we are peculiarly tried. We shall see peculiar danger around us. We shall stand or fall this year to our good or injury in new scenes of probation.

We shall have new wants, temporal and spiritual.

If we are now full, and have no need, it may not be so always. Some may be so situated for the want of means that they will suffer anguish. Past difficulties and straits will seem easy compared with these new necessities; not that it is really so, but this is our temptation to feel that the present distress exceeds others. New circumstances will create new desires,—some rational and others improper, but all of them conspiring to make new wants, which must either be gratified or suppressed. But above all, our spiritual natures will need help. It may be, it is true, some will seek to satisfy the wants of their souls with earthly pleasure, feeding the immortal with perishing things; but this will leave us unsatisfied, and still crying, “Who will show us any good?” But if we are sensible of our spiritual wants, that is, of our thirst after God, and likeness to him, we shall not think so much even of our natural hunger as of them, for we shall

feel that the soul is more than meat, and the supply of it more than raiment. We shall have new desires for the favor of God, new convictions of our infinite ill-desert; there will probably be times when there will be disclosed to us new recesses dark and deep in our natures which need to be enlightened and purified by the Holy Spirit. We shall see times, if God is carrying on a work of sanctification within us, when we shall have assurances of our depravity that will fill us with confusion; and in proportion as we advance in Christian improvement the comparison of ourselves with God and with perfect goodness will have this effect on us. There will be times when we shall have insatiable desires after a likeness to God's requirements, when the consciousness of remaining evil will make us cry, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit."

Then there will be times when the anticipation of death and eternity will make us earnestly desire the light of God's countenance and the full assurance of hope. As some who approach a distant city gain new views of it and it breaks upon them with increasing power, so as we advance towards the world to which we are going, we shall have fresh impressions of its reality and of the importance of preparing for it. There

will be times when the death of others will make us cry to Him who alone can give us the victory over death. Instances of death will occur among the fashionable and worldly circles, in which the gay, the thoughtless, the happy in this world's goods may make us feel the vanity of earth and the contrast of the future state to one who lived for time, for self, for earthly pleasure.

Some of the good and useful may be suddenly cut down in the midst of their usefulness, and make us feel that nothing, even goodness and usefulness creates exemption from the summons of death. Perhaps some of our own kindred may be called away, and the voice of God may sound in our ears, saying, "Thus will I do unto thee: and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God." Then what shall we do without God, without Christ, without hope? There will be times when eternity will cast its great shadows upon us, and the apprehension of future endless existence in joy or woe will, if we are not dead in our moral sensibilities, excite intense longings in us to be at peace with God, that we may say, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me," and be able to add, "For we know that if this earthly house of our tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

It is impossible for us to live in any comfort

with strong ungratified desires. The desires of a regenerated soul which is alive to God, are stronger than that of flesh and blood, because they belong to our higher natures which are capable of greater excitement, and the objects which appeal to them are more powerful than the limited objects of time and sense. The more these feelings are exercised, the more we become capable of feeling, and thus with advancing years, we are to expect that we shall be more and more sensitive to religious joys and fears. As time passes away, as the things of the world to come draw near, the heart will often beat quicker, the soul will be more frequently thrilled with expectations of all which is to come. At every new view by faith of things unseen, the impression will be constantly repeated upon our minds, "Ye have not passed this way heretofore," and the consequence will be, that we shall need God's presence and aid as we never felt the need of it before.

Shall we not have new transgressions to repent of and be forgiven?

There is no man that liveth and sinneth not. God will prove us to see what is in our hearts, and though we purpose that we will not transgress, and in the main may live as Christians, we shall nevertheless sometimes have occasion for deep humility and application to the blood that cleanseth from all sin. The greater our experience of the goodness

of God, the greater our attainments as Christians, the more deeply shall we feel our departures from what is right, the more bitter will be our tears of sorrow, the more need shall we have of a divine Spirit, to search us and discover to us our error and the way of restoration. We may rely upon this, that the coming year, if we are truly the followers of Christ, we shall feel our need, as we never felt it before, of continued forbearance, mercy, and of the assistance of God's Spirit to make us what we ought to be.

Our character as moral and religious beings depends very much on our views of moral and religious truth, the principles we are thereby led to form, and the motives which we draw from them to influence our conduct. If we have unworthy views of God, our characters and conduct will show it, and though these views may be indistinct, yet, like the letters on a stamp which it is difficult to read, but which when the seal receives them are legible and plain, so will it be with the impression which our views of God make upon our characters and habitual conduct. Our views and feelings with regard to Christ, our understanding of scriptural requirements, that is, of the law of God, our sense of duty as derived from conscience and the Bible, will determine what we are, and what we do. The present year, we are all to receive impressions of these things: in reading the Bible, in reflecting upon ourselves, and by the various means

of religious improvement which we enjoy we are to be influenced with regard to the great subject of moral and religious truth. Now we may be left to fall into error. Though in the main sincere, we may adopt some erroneous principle of conduct which will hurt us, and so far as we have influence, those with whom we are connected. Or we may be sanctified by the truth; receive right views of every thing that can effect our characters and conduct, and grow thereby in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The present year we are either to know more of religion, moral and spiritual things, by the increase of a correct knowledge, or we are to know less by misapprehending important truths. This is of the same importance to our spiritual well-being as the eye is to the movements, the happiness and welfare of the body and mind. Now if thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

There is an event which may occur to us this year of the most solemn and important nature, the event of death. As we go through its dark portals, with what meaning it may be said to us, "Ye have not passed this way heretofore." We may add, "And shall never pass this way again." If prepared, eternal life awaits us, and if not, we cannot return and prepare to die. The chosen portion and the world for which we have prepared on earth receive us when we die. Suppose that this year includes the day of our departure out of this

world, and suppose that we knew it. We should feel the importance of making our calling and election sure. But is it not wise to consider the words of Christ on this point?—"Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately." "Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh."

Let us turn for instruction in the improvement of this subject to the correction given to Israel in connection with the words of our text. As they had never passed that way before, they were commanded so to arrange themselves and conduct their march, as to have a clear and full view of the ark of the covenant as it passed by before them. By keeping their eye upon it and following where it led, they would go forward in that dangerous passage of the Jordan in safety. What may we learn from this to assist us in the important and trying events of the coming year?

I answer,

The ark of God, upon which the Israelites were commanded to fix their eyes, contained the law of God, the two tables of stone. We may not inappropriately say, that if we would pass through the scenes of coming life safely, we should have constant reference to the will of God.

It is impossible for us to err essentially if we have this simple desire and aim, to know and do the will of God. If our conduct takes its character from the hour of secret prayer and meditation, in which we have implicitly said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? — and the prevailing spirit of our words is that of Christ, “I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart,” it would not be easy for us to go astray. Our disposition would be to do right, and as for the ability, God giveth liberally of wisdom to them that ask him. “The meek will he guide in judgment; the meek will he teach his way.” “What man is he that feareth the Lord? Him shall he teach in the way that he” — the man — “shall choose.” “The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and he delighteth in his way.” This is perfect protection. What assurance of counsel and guidance! And the condition is that we fix our heart and our eye upon the will of God. Let us remember, then, this year as we pass along, to fix our eye upon God as our path, motion, guide, original and end. That ark which Israel followed implied in its nature and use something else. It was the ark of the covenant. It was the sign and symbol of the covenant between God and Israel. Upon it the Israelites were commanded to fix their eyes. I observe therefore, finally:

In passing through the scenes of the coming year, we must remember the covenant there is between many of us and God.

This house is witness that many of you made a covenant with God. Other houses of worship testify concerning some of us that we also made a covenant with him, and this table and these walls bear witness to that covenant frequently repeated. We are not to forget that we have sworn to the Lord and cannot go back. Who of us wishes to do it? Who would renounce a covenant-keeping God; who would abjure a dying, interceding Saviour; who would forever grieve away the Holy Ghost from their hearts? None of us, it may be, deliberately; and yet are we not all prone to do it unconsciously, and do we not do it when we sin; when we act on worldly principles, and prefer worldly pleasures to serving God? In those times of temptation, we are to remember our covenant-engagements. "I have sworn unto the Lord and I cannot go back." We do not, perhaps, think enough of our having made a covenant with God, that he witnessed and recognized it. There should be times, special times, when for the sake of impressing this truth upon our minds we should devote ourselves to a particular recollection of our engagement to be the Lord's. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper and the service preparatory to it are suitable opportunities for us to consider and to renew our covenant with God. Suppose, my Christian friends, that we lived with this habitual impression upon our minds, "I am under solemn covenant engagements to serve and obey God;"

it would have a similar effect on us as it did on the host of Israel as they looked upon that ark of the covenant going before them and leading the way. There went the law of their God ; there went the sign of the covenant between them and him ; they must follow after it with their eyes upon it, and every pious Israelite could not fail in so doing to walk daily with God.

Now then, Christians, the ark of the Lord of hosts is about to move on before you for another year in the wilderness. Ye cannot yet come to the rest and to the inheritance which the Lord your God giveth you. But you are on the way to it. We will go forward from this time in accordance with the example of Israel now set before us. We are to assemble, a sacramental host around a sacramental ordinance, purposely to renew our covenant, to ask and receive the pardon of all our sins, and then to begin for another year our journey heavenward. All that I would add is, keep your heart and eye upon the will of God, and remember the covenant which stands between you and him. Obey that will, and it shall be well with you forever. Keep that covenant, and in all the scenes of life and death, of judgment and eternity, you will find that God is to you a covenant-keeping God.

As the host of Israel moved on to their promised Canaan, through the countries of those who did not serve God, so there is a people of God who are

now passing on to heaven in the midst of the impenitent, of the aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. Those of you, beloved hearers, who are not in covenant with God, witnessed by him in secret, if not in public, are called to see an interesting and affecting sight to-day. You see the people of God, belonging to these churches, preparing now to resume their journey to their promised land. Here is to be the feast of the passover slain for them, and here they are to renew their covenant with God, and then to march on towards heaven. Over their heads is the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. The angel of the covenant leads them, guides them; they are drawing nigh to their journey's end. They have seen the clusters from the promised land; sometimes they see the hill-tops and scent the breezes of their glorious home. But they are passing on without you. They have sojourned in your country for some time, and you have not joined them, but are yet strangers to the covenant of promise. We propose to you this day, that you solemnly consider whether you will not join with the people of God. If ye will inquire, inquire ye, return, come. You may never see the people of God again under such interesting and solemn circumstances as you now do upon this new-year's sabbath. When this anniversary returns, you may be beyond the reach of a similar invitation. Lifting up your eyes, you may see them coming from the east and from the west,

from the north and from the south, and sitting down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of God. From the far distant hill of Zion their song may come to you like the sound of many waters, the voice of a great multitude, and of harpers harping on their harps.

Do not venture on alone. Be this the prayer of every one of you this day, witnessed by a surrender of yourself to God: "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory."





JANUARY.

FIRST SABBATH AFTERNOON.



A NEW YEAR'S PRAYER.

“Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am.”

—PSALM 39: 4.

IT was not, of course, the prayer of the writer that he might know when he was to die, for he could not have made such a request with any expectation that it would be granted.

But his meaning is, Lord, make me to think of my end and to remember that my days have a certain measure, so that I may keep in mind that I am frail.

He had occasion, as we all have, to offer such a prayer because our natural disposition is not to consider that there is a fixed measure to our days.

It would be more in accordance with some of

the sentiments and customs of a new year to begin the addresses from the pulpit in a different strain from that suggested by the text. Strange as it may appear to some, the surest way to make this the happiest year of our lives is to begin with a due sense of our frailty and of the uncertainty which there is how many, or whether all its days will be measured to us. The subject of this discourse, therefore, will be the advantages of keeping the end of life in view.

Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is. Singular prayer, in the estimation of many, whose petition rather would be, Lord, help me to keep this subject out of my thoughts.

I. Our life is to have an end, and we know not how soon.

On the calendar of future time a day is marked by the appointment of God which is to be with each of us, respectively, the day of our death. As we take up the calendar for the present year, all its days have the same blank look, except that here and there we see an anniversary of an interesting event. One of those undistinguished days, however, may be the day of days to us. It is certain, if we judge from the past, that one or more of us will die this year. Of the twenty years last past there has been no one in which one or more who were present on the Sabbath of the new year in health, have not during the year been numbered

with the dead. You would not have selected them as appointed to die that year any more than you now regard yourself as destined this year to die. This year there will be an exception to the course of human events if one or more of us now present are not at the close of the year in eternity.

Since, then, our life is to have an end and we know not how soon, is there any advantage in being familiar with this truth? That there is, will be seen when we consider :

II. That all our future and eternal condition depends upon this short and uncertain life.

Of all the reflections which occur to a serious mind in connection with the death of a fellow-creature there is no one more affecting than this : He has entered upon an unchangeable state for eternity.

To think that his condition is now unalterable ; that while God lives and reigns that soul will follow on in the track of which death was the portal, is a reflection which makes the event of death unutterably solemn. Even though it be a Christian friend who has died, one of whom you have the best possible assurance that he is happy, this cannot fail to affect you as much as any other consideration : His condition for eternity is now fixed.

A man who is anxious to sustain his credit, and is liable to perplexity if he does not keep in mind the days when his pecuniary obligations come to maturity, is careful to keep his memorandum in

such a manner that he will be sure to anticipate the day of payment in season to provide for it. If for such a purpose a man compels himself to know that day, and studiously keeps the approach of it in mind, it is a part of wisdom and prudence for us to desire that God would make us to know our end. Consequences which are never to cease depend upon it; and there is this consideration connected with it, that we know not from day to day when it will be. To-day you may be anticipating years on earth; to-morrow you may be where the seal of eternity will be placed on your character and condition.

If there is any folly which can be called infinite it is to neglect to prepare for the end of life, and an unwillingness to know that it must have an end. It must come, and with it the dread realities of a future state. Lord, make me to know mine end.

III. We cannot in a suitable manner prepare for the end of life, unless we are willing to know and feel that there is a measure to our days.

The habit of men generally, is to feel and act without reference to the end of life, but rather as though they were to live here indefinitely. A gloomy, desponding frame of mind would unfit us for the duties of life, and neither Psalmist nor any one else ever prayed that such might be the influence of expected death on him. The contemplation of the end of life referred to by the Psalmist,

was a rational admission and a deliberate consideration of the truth that he must die. Unless we are affected by this truth, death has no proper influence upon us. The Psalmist wished that he might be impressed with this habitual thought that he was frail: That I may know how frail I am.

If we admit the thought and make it a practical thing with us, that we are frail, that our days have a measure, and the end of life will certainly arrive, it will moderate our pursuit of mere worldly happiness; and while it does not abate our zeal and industry, it will lead us to set a lower value and therefore a more just estimate of worldly things. This is the intention of those words of the apostle, "Let your moderation be known unto all men; the Lord is at hand." The thought that the coming of the Son of man, at our death, is near, is here given as a reason for moderation in everything. We would not be surprised by him in the midst of excesses and follies. "Seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless." Therefore it is said again: "Let us not sleep as do others; but let us watch and be sober." Now the expectation of our end is the means of making us sober and moderate in all things.

But something still needs to be said to meet the natural feeling that the contemplation of the end of life is inconsistent with happiness while we live,

and many perhaps cannot see anything in such a prayer as we have in our text : " That I may know how frail I am," but a melancholy state of mind, and a hindrance to all enjoyment.

I observe, therefore,

IV. A proper view of the end of life is the means of rational peace and comfort.

To one who believes that his peace is made with God through the Redeemer, the more familiar the contemplation of the end of life, the greater the enjoyment of life, while life remains. There is no happiness to be compared with the prospect of being prepared for eternity, the great transaction past of being justified and admitted to the number of the children of God, with the assurance also that if this earthly house of our tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

There is abundant evidence of this, that they who in possession of a good hope have been brought nigh to death, and were prepared to depart and be with Christ, on their recovery have been able afterward, to contemplate death free from those terrors with which it was once invested.

So with those who have followed a Christian down to the valley of death, and have seen his composure and his anticipations of Heaven, and that the mental pain of dying, in the case of a Christian, is far greater in imagination than in reality, and how one thing succeeds another grad-

ually and peacefully, till the soul takes its joyful flight to realms on high. There is a feeling, I say, in the spectator of such scenes, if he be a Christian, that death is desirable, and it would be no great effort for him to lie down on that same bed of death, and follow the emancipated spirit on its radiant way to Heaven. To such an one there is no spot so sacred and pleasant as that from which the soul of a Christian friend ascended to Christ. That spot is the foot of the ladder reaching into Heaven, and the angels of God ascend and descend on it. There is no place on earth which seems nearer Heaven than the place of departure for a redeemed spirit leaving earth and entering the skies. Once, perhaps, death and all connected with it was clothed in terrible forms to one who afterward when he loses a child or a Christian friend by death has no other feeling towards it than that it is the gate of endless joy, which when shadows and darkness were upon it was a gloomy barrier, but when illumined by the sunshine of Heaven reflected from a redeemed soul passing through it, appears to be no less beautiful than one of those gates of pearl, on golden hinges turning, which are the gates of life rather than the gates of death.

We see then, and it is an interesting and comforting truth, that the more closely we are brought into contact with death, if we are the heirs of God, it becomes a source of absolute pleasure.

The curse connected with it seems to be removed ; and dying appears to be translation or transfiguration. A forest in autumn, when its foliage is touched by a sudden sharp frost, is an object of great beauty. There are not many objects in nature which fill the mind with such sensations ; and some who have crossed the seas to view our scenery have declared that this change of the leaf surpassed every form of beauty in nature which they had ever seen. Decay and death come to the forests in mild and beautiful forms. Thus to the eye of a Christian the death of a believer has no terrors ; it is the change of the leaf. This gazing up into Heaven to follow the upward flight of the soul is not only natural and pleasant, but it makes you feel that it will be no hard path for you to tread if you are Christ's. So that we see this truth most plainly established by facts, that the closer the contact which a surviving Christian has with death, the more desirable it seems to him, and the more of a hallowed light is reflected by it on his days. It is true, then, beyond question that a proper view of the end of life is the means of rational peace and comfort. "Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days what it is ; that I may know how frail I am."

V. If we connect with the end of life, as we should do, the thought of being in Heaven, it will be extremely profitable to keep that end in view.

With all their doubts and fears, Christians can-

not but say that they hope through infinite grace to reach Heaven. This is the lowest point of faith and hope. There are times when they feel and say that unless everything is a delusion, they have complied with the conditions of eternal life, and they know that to all such Heaven is sure. This being so, we surely ought to feel the powers of the world to come more than we do. Alas! how grovelling we are in our affections and pursuits, our souls are too much like domesticated fowls, which though they have wings, never rise above the house top; and seldom fly at all unless they are frightened; whereas others soar in the firmament. The fault is with our faith, which is like wings to the soul; or because we are encumbered and weighed down, or our carnal natures have too much attraction towards the earth to rise far above it:—

“O might I once mount up and see
The glories of the eternal skies.”

If we only had some adequate impression of what it is to be in Heaven, surely we should say with David, “Lord, make me to know mine end.”

Suppose, then, that a year from this morning, one or more of us, as there is hardly a question some of us will be, are in Heaven. Would it seem to us, then, an undesirable thing, while living, to think much of Heaven? How is this? Let us endeavor to satisfy ourselves on this point as we may

easily do by some reflections on those who this morning find themselves there, but a year to-day joined in the praises and prayers of this sanctuary.

When the morning of the new year opened on many a dwelling, where the voices of children, like the early birds hailed the day, the thought came over those bereaved households: One who imparted the chief pleasure to this occasion is not here. Where is he? We saluted him first of all on such an occasion as this, but now we cannot wish him a Happy New Year. But how little he needs that wish. A Happy New Year indeed it is with him, and thousands of returns in prospect. The thought is irresistible: What a contrast between his prospects for the year and ours! It is a thought of inexpressible pleasure that a departed friend has before him the prospect of unmingled joy:

“Thou art in port; we on the stormy deep.”

He will have no sin, no temptation, no departing from God, no fears. This year what acquaintances he will make in Heaven! Parents, and brothers, and sisters, and near friends are in many instances his companions. We on earth shall meet in our little circles to pray and weep over our sins, to comfort each other in our trials, to keep our Fasts and Thanksgivings, and to gird ourselves for the work of Christ. He will meet with friends and with the societies of Heaven to rejoice, but not to weep. We must be exercised with earthly cares,

what shall we eat, and wherewithal shall we be clothed? We must bear the burden of family government, discharge the duties of our callings, and meet the vicissitudes of life. He now has no care even for his children; his responsibility for them is entirely taken from him, and at the same time, we cannot but think his ability to help them is far greater than ever. It admits of a question, after all, whether the loss, as we call it, of a parent, is a loss on the whole to his children, if that parent is with Christ. Angels are "ministering spirits." He who says glorified friends are not, is as presumptuous as he who asserts that they are. Who, in Heaven, of all created beings, can feel towards a surviving family like a parent? While we need not be visionary, or build anything upon the idea, we may suppose that a glorified parent or friend is more than ever our helper. The Saviour, it is true, absolutely needs none to help him in taking care of us, yet he employs the ministry of angels. "They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." And we may without presumption believe, that the friend whom we felt we had lost, irreparably lost, is after all, a more powerful defender and helper than ever, and it is possible, was taken from us that he might be so. Instead, then, of spending this year in cryings, and tears, and labor, and travail on behalf of those who were dear to him, he will per-

haps, spend it in promoting their interests and happiness a thousandfold more than ever.

No more does he awake day after day, and take up the burden of life ; no more does he spend those long winter nights, restless with weakness or pain. This year he will attain to a state of knowledge and bliss immeasurably beyond that of the wisest man on earth. O the prospect with which this year opened before a glorified saint, who on the morning of the new year found himself with Christ ! Lord, it is good for us to be there ! Peter was right in saying this on Tabor, but not as to the Tabernacles. *It is good to be there.* “Lord, make us to know our end, and the measure of our days, what it is ; that we may know how frail we are.”

I remark in conclusion,

I. This subject brings forcibly to view the blessedness of the true Christian. He is able to make death itself minister to his comfort and improvement. He is able to look it in the face. He can pray, Lord, make me to know mine end. He is not obliged as others are to hide himself from the thought of death. To him apply those words of assurance and hope : “All things are yours ; whether the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come ; all are yours ; and ye are Christ’s ; and Christ is God’s.”

One thing needs to be observed : if you are at peace with God, you have nothing to fear ; if

death should overtake you, God will give you feelings which will enable you to meet it in a manner of which in health you are not competent to have an adequate conception. This new portion of your existence may well begin with the prayer that God will give you a proper sense of your frailty, so that you may have the blessedness of that servant whom Christ, you may have observed, describes more minutely and with greater emphasis than almost anything else, whom his Lord when He cometh shall find watching. Let us especially bear in mind that if we are all which we profess, we are going to Heaven. "For they that say such things, declare plainly that they seek a country." Let us often think what it must be to find ourselves in Heaven, and with what feelings we shall regard our present conduct and manner of life as heirs to Heaven. We have had many warnings; many solemn providences called to us from the year that is passed. God has taken others and made them the instruments of teaching us. Let us listen to the voice of His providence, saying as it does, so loudly to us, be ye also ready. With such events passing before us, and coming so near to us surely we shall have no excuse if we do not walk with God, nor can we say, however suddenly death may come to us, that we have not been sufficiently warned or had sufficient opportunity to be ready against the coming of the Son of Man.

Finally. Death will probably come this year to some now present and find them unprepared. It has been so in past years. Some of you, beloved friends, probably will not see another New Year's morning. Every day counts off one more of the few days which are left to you ere time with you shall be no longer. Every day is as precious and should be so esteemed by you as the days of a man whose time to die is fixed by the Chief Magistrate. When I was a youth, a sheriff brought into church a condemned man who was to be executed that week. We looked on him with awe knowing that he was hearing his last sermon, and before the next Sabbath he would be in eternity. One sermon is to be your last, — perhaps the present year. Awake! the work of preparing for a whole eternity is yet to be done. Wake up! your sun is past noon, and you are asleep. Sleep on, and the night of death will soon close over your slumbers. A year this morning, I make no risk in saying, one or more of you will not hear the Gospel, and I may not be able to preach it any more. You and I may meet this year at the bar of God. Next New Year's Sabbath, should we have an interview there, how true and important this text and this appeal will appear! With the gates of a new year the gate of mercy stands open. Enter ye in at the strait gate. Listen, and the Spirit within you says, "Come!" Hark, and from Heaven

that company, the Bride, says "Come!" Jesus tells you, "And behold I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be." May we be able to add, "Even so, Amen."





JANUARY.

SECOND SABBATH MORNING.



THE GOSPEL, AND HOW TO PREACH IT.

“ And preach the Gospel to every creature.”—MARK 16: 15.

WHAT is the Gospel, and how should it be preached?

What is the Gospel? It is a declaration of pardon and of salvation, secured at once, to every one who accepts Jesus Christ.

Justice demands the salvation of every one who believes in Christ. It is not, however, because of any merit in the act of believing; for there is no merit in believing, which, moreover, is the gift of God.

But He who ordained, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die," has also decreed, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life," "and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." Justice stands engaged to fulfil this decree. An act of mercy may involve justice as much as an act of vengeance. Thus we read, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

This is the Gospel. It amounts to this: The reception by a sinner, of Jesus Christ, instantly secures for that sinner the presence and progressive work of the Holy Spirit in his heart, and certain salvation.

Thus we understand the Epistles, which were intended as practical commentaries on the Gospel. Such is the Gospel which our Saviour commissioned the Apostles to preach.

To preach the Gospel is to acquaint men with this assurance from God, that he freely forgives all their sins and secures Heaven to them as soon as they surrender themselves to their atoning Saviour.

Such is the message with which we are commissioned. Evidently there is no employment on earth, nor can we conceive of any in Heaven to be compared in importance and interest with this. It was worthy to be the last utterance in this world of the Redeemer when he had finished his

work and was ascending into Heaven: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature."

The Gospel is a gratuitous offer from God to sinners, of all which God can bestow. In this offer is included the work of the Holy Spirit in the soul, producing repentance and forgiveness, love, hatred of sin, progressive goodness, perseverance and final redemption. These are offered without any equivalent in return. Those who accept this offer will indeed make returns, which will be in proportion to the sense of obligation in having everything for nothing; but all their returns will not, cannot pay for what they receive, and God did not intend that they should. It was not for the purpose of getting remuneration from man in these things that he provided and sent to man this offer of every thing for nothing. The obedience and love of man are not so essential to the happiness of God that he went to an infinite expense to buy these. He says, "I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for my own sake, and will not remember thy sins." There is something more important in itself, and of course in the view of God, than the salvation of all his sinful creatures, and that is, his own glory. Therefore no returns that we can make to God are any return to him for his grace in the Gospel. Hence it is a mistake if in preaching the Gospel we dwell mainly on our compensation to God for his grace.

So that if we dwell upon our duty to God as the great burden of the Gospel, we do not preach the Gospel.

Our motives may be good, but we are mistaken if in explaining the Gospel we make it our main happiness to tell men what they ought to do in the way of obeying the Gospel. For the Gospel is not the Law. The Law is still our duty and will be for ever. But if we as preachers are mainly occupied in telling men about themselves, we may be preaching the truth, but this is not the Gospel, it is the Law. True, the Law is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. But it is the Gospel which we must be continually reaching after. The Law must bring our sermons to Christ, else they are merely legal and not evangelical.

Thus, if we are continually employed in telling Christians their inconsistencies and sinfulness, reproving and urging them to seek a higher standard of living, "rise to a higher plane;" and goad them to efforts after an undefined condition of sanctity, this is not the Gospel; it is the Law. And if we stop here and do this habitually, we live at the foot of Sinai, and the frame of mind in our Christian friends will be that of Moses, "I exceedingly fear and quake."

All the things now mentioned may properly be used in illustration of the Gospel, but they are not the Gospel. There are two different ways of

emphasizing a certain passage in the first chapter of John. One way is this: "For the Law was given by *Moses*, but grace and truth came by *Jesus Christ*." Such we do not suppose to express the meaning or intention of John. But read it thus: "For the *Law* was given by Moses, but *grace* and *truth*, came by Jesus Christ." Gracious truth, the truths of grace, are put in contrast with the Law; it is this grace and truth, these truths of grace which constitute the Gospel; and every thing that we say must be only in furtherance of this great theme, the infinite free grace of God to the undeserving and lost.

We can make great mistakes in dwelling on the duty of repentance and faith in such a way as to fix the minds of men on them rather than on the Gospel. Christ said, when he had given his commission to the Apostles, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned."

That is not the Gospel; it is the consequence of accepting and of not accepting the Gospel. Are we not in danger of dwelling on these consequences more than on the glorious Gospel itself? For there is a way of telling good news so as to make it repulsive. We can deliver a message which in itself is cheerful and hopeful in such a manner that it will have a wrong effect.

If we should bid you to a feast but should add, "Unless you come you will highly displease those

who prepare it, and you may never be asked again, and must go without food until the next meal time," it would not improve your appetite or your temper, and might on the contrary make you prefer to fast. Even if you had been doing wrong in your treatment of the invitation, such representation would not have the best effect on you. When the king's invitation to the marriage feast met with refusal, his injunction to those who went again with the invitation was, "Tell them which are bidden, Behold I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage." Here was no threatening, but renewed sollicitation, because the occasion was an entertainment and a favor. We must not press this beyond a proper limit, but it suggests the prevailing spirit and temper with which we must preach the Gospel. For there may be a most forbidding way of stating the Gospel. The mind of the preacher must not be chiefly possessed at the time with the guilt of refusing, or with the consequences of refusing in such way as to make the sinner feel that he is accosted by one who carries concealed weapons; nor is it best always to close our sermons with this as the leading impression, that to reject the Gospel is attended with fearful danger. "He that winneth souls is wise." The human mind is an instrument to be played upon. It requires knowledge and discernment to judge how best to bring out its

answering notes. We are to persuade men, and persuasion requires a judicious use of all motives, none of them exaggerated, especially not those which excite repulsion.

In thus explaining what the Gospel is, I have partly anticipated the remarks which properly belong under the second part of the discourse. I observe in reply to this part of the question with which we began, How must we preach the Gospel?

We must preach the Gospel in the spirit of the Gospel.

A man who fully believes the Gospel cannot fail to be happy under the influence of his employment. It will make him love his hearers. He does not come to them saying, Hear now ye rebels. He looks upon them as objects of divine forbearance and of the love of God. He sees before him those whom God is ready that moment to forgive upon their acceptance of pardon and his offered love. On looking over the congregation, his love will be awakened as he sees one and another whom he believes to be in special danger, or in a state of aggravated sin. It will make him earnest, but it will subdue his tones to affection, suppress harshness and make him weep rather than reproach them.

Also in speaking to Christians, he sees imperfect people, none of them having reached even their own imperfect standard; compassed with infirmity and temptation, and always coming short of their

own duty, yet if they have believed in Jesus Christ he feels that they are as truly the heirs of God as though he saw them enthroned and crowned.

Paul speaks in such a spirit to his Christian friends. He rejoices over them as God's elect, as people whom God has saved, and whom he is leading on to Heaven. Paul knew that he might be deceived in some of them, yet he addresses them all as "holy brethren," justified and sanctified. True, he has occasion to say, "Lie not one to another, brethren;" they were all of them recent converts from heathenism, yet one might infer from the tone of Paul's Epistles that those churches were filled with the choice spirits of Christendom after years of Christian tuition, such was Paul's love and joy toward the objects of God's grace in Jesus Christ. He looked on them as regenerate, not merely as reformed inebriates and thieves; but as the workmanship of the Holy Spirit. He is a model, therefore, for ministers and Christians in their way of addressing their fellow heirs of salvation. When we reprove, rebuke, exhort, it must be "With all long-suffering and doctrine." An upbraiding, vindictive, sarcastic preacher, teacher, or exhorter, has not learned the spirit of the Gospel.

After all is said and done, some will resist and reject our best endeavors. Then comes the trial of one's spirit.

We must be as gentle as ever; we must begin the next time and go forward with our message as the sun each day rises on the evil and the good, and the next rain falls on the just and the unjust.

In contrast to this, it is easy for ministers and Christians to feel impatient, to be irritable, to be provoked, even, as evil doers; and it is easy for sinful men to do as in the time of Moses: "They angered him at the waters of Meribah, so that it went ill with Moses for their sake."

One of the unscrutable acts of God was the shutting of Moses out of the promised land. We all feel that it would have been an appropriate termination and reward of his life of toil, to lead Israel into that land, and to have spent the evening of his days with his people in their inheritance. But in his death and burial in Moab we who address our fellow sinners in God's name have a perpetual admonition to take heed what manner of spirit we are of.

Can there be anything more unseemly than for a pardoned rebel to speak impatiently to his fellows in the name of a long-suffering God, the God who, when Moses prayed to see God's glory, passed by and proclaimed it as he did, placing in the foreground for its chief impression his grace and mercy!

When we deal with men on God's behalf, we must deal with them as objects of salvation and not of perdition. The spirit of our message

should be, For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us.

When we preach the future endless punishment of the wicked, we should do it by the side of the cross. The cross is the principal proof of future endless punishment.

For if there be an infinite ransom, there must be an infinite danger; if the atonement be infinite there must be a corresponding guilt and perdition. As Columbus argued that there must be a Western Continent to balance the globe, so we believe that the atonement supposes a liability in guilt and its consequences corresponding to so great an event as the incarnation of the Creator and the sacrifice of that Incarnate One upon the cross.

Therefore we should preach to men about their guilt and danger as something from which there is a great salvation, and thus, knowing the terrors of the Lord, we should persuade men.

There is danger with us all that the Gospel may not be preached by us as prominently as it should be; that moral and religious themes connected with the Gospel occupy our mind disproportionately, rather than that simple message which constitutes the Gospel in distinction from every other truth.

We ought to make all other truths pathways to this; and men should be made to feel continually

that our object is to set before them the gratuitous love of God, the free pardon of sin, and to urge their acceptance of it, and their heartfelt, grateful love to Christ for his free salvation.

This is the best way to make men moral; whereas the most direct preaching of morality alone is always a lamentable failure. Witness the experience and testimony of Thomas Scott and Dr. Chalmers.

Therefore to make Christians grow in grace, cultivating Christian excellence, we must preach continually to them of the infinite free grace of God, which they constantly need as at the first. But fault-finding, reproofs and rebukes without this only exasperate and discourage.

God himself has devised a way to reconcile men and also to save them which believe; it is by the free, unconditional pardon of their sins, and not by the power of the Law, by love and not by wrath, by the obligations of love more than by the obligations of legal duty, "For Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to every one that believeth," a passage capable of wide application.

It is pleasant to witness the ordination of ministers of the Gospel for this reason: each is another testimony to the world of the exceeding grace of God.

He is not a professed teacher of morals, or of education, or of learning, but a herald of free

grace, of pardon and eternal life as a bestowment without money and without price. But as such he is, indirectly, a teacher of morals, and a promoter of every good thing in civilization, the Gospel being the source of true and permanent advancement in all that makes society prosperous and happy.

His commission is to every creature. "To the greatest of sinners, to the dying, to the soul shut up in long despair, to the Christian, the backslider, the reprobate, to every living sinner,—pardon and the love of God, upon the simple, heartfelt acceptance of it, irrespective of merit and demerit,—every thing for nothing.

Such, we believe, is the Gospel, and such the way for us to preach it. To every one who accepts the Saviour, justice ensures eternal salvation as fully as it requires perdition for sin; for by the covenant of grace justice is pledged to fulfil the offers of the Gospel. All the attributes of God are on the side of every sinner who comes to Christ.

"And this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you." Every Sabbath ought to be a day of rejoicing. When we hear the bells ring, we shall do well to feel that they are celebrating the grace of God. If our object and employment as ministers were more exclusively to preach the Gospel, and the Gospel only in the spirit of the Gospel, the Sabbath bells would awaken pleasant associations in the minds of some now repelled by

them, and who hear them now as though they were the bells of court houses summoning men to trial or to hear a verdict.

True, after all is said and done, many will reject this grace and perish. It was so always. We must not be dismayed if it be so under our ministry. "But we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved and in them that perish. To the one we are the savor of death unto death ; and to the other the savor of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things ? "



JANUARY.

SECOND SABBATH AFTERNOON.



HOW TO HEAR THE GOSPEL.

“Take heed, therefore, how ye hear.”—LUKE 8 : 18.

THERE is probably no one thing amongst men, of which the influence is more powerful, and more important in results than *public preaching*. This is the grand instrument chosen by the Author of the Gospel to carry into effect the designs of his life and of his death. The great commission, which he gave to his immediate successors, the Apostles, who were to establish his religion was, “Go ye into all the world and *preach* the Gospel to every creature;” not merely disseminate it in conversation or by publications; but convene men together wherever you can,

and address them thus collected. This idea is conveyed by the original word translated "*preach*;" for it signifies to make public proclamation or announcement as a herald.

We are so constituted, that public exhortations or harangues addressed to us in company with a multitude, and by the voice, and words, and arguments of a fellow man, have great power over our minds. And there is something in the methods of Christian assemblies which have been in use in the Church from the earliest period, wonderfully fitted to promote the object of the Gospel.

There is a stated time, the Holy Sabbath, observed by the great body of Christendom, for this one purpose. There is something in our associations with the day which to a well regulated mind is of a soothing influence. What is more delightful than the Sabbath morning? The mind is prepared in some good measure by the gradual approach of the day, and the cessation, as it comes on, of worldly cares and tumult for an attention to the highest concerns of our natures. Then we repair to the consecrated place, to join with our fellow-beings in the worship of one God, to hear his word. One who has been set apart for the purpose, and maintained that he may without distraction devote himself to the work, brings before them those truths of the Gospel upon which his mind has been led to meditate; and being himself a partaker in all their wants and infirmities as sin-

ners, their offers of salvation, and their hopes and fears relating to eternity, addresses them on the most important subjects that can interest man or angel, and I may say, the adorable Godhead. The preacher is supposed to make it his great business during the week to draw instruction from the word of God, being furnished with all necessary helps for understanding that word, and permitted to meditate as the great apostle says, upon these things, and give himself wholly to them. It is obvious that such an institution as this is better than any that the wisdom of man could devise to accomplish the purposes of the great salvation. The most of men are addressed at times and under circumstances most favorable for a calm, dispassionate and undivided attention, upon subjects connected with their eternal welfare. He who addresses them is one of their race, interested, by his own experience, in the welfare of their souls, supposed to be acquainted with the various motives of the Gospel and with the way to be saved. The great duties of Christian practice, the means of sanctification and preparing for Heaven, the way to have promise of this life and that which is to come, besides the thrilling thoughts of the nature and destinies of the soul, the Being and perfections of Jehovah, the wonders of the redemption which is by Jesus Christ, subjects of surpassing greatness and moment, are treated of for the purpose of preparing each

hearer for a happy immortality. Taking it for granted that the appointed minister is faithful in his preparation for his work and in the discharge of it, any one must perceive that the institution of public preaching is better fitted to benefit men in their spiritual concerns than any other method of instruction. We find abundant confirmation of this truth. When the Saviour was about to leave the earth, what did he choose as the farewell gift to those whom he had loved in life and death? It was the Christian ministry. This was the Saviour's farewell gift to men. When he ascended on high he gave gifts to men, — to some pastors, to others teachers, for the work of the ministry for the edifying of the body of Christ. We know that Christ would choose the best means for this purpose, and we are here told that these means consist of the public ministrations of the word. And to quote no further, it has pleased God by preaching to save them that believe. To some, indeed, it is foolishness ; — to them that believe — the power of God and the wisdom of God.

It is very plain, then, that all who are disposed may derive great benefit from public preaching. It is the appointed means of their sanctification for Heaven.

But there is no truth more commonly observed, and lamented over by the ministers of the word, it is of course a matter of lamentation, that public preaching is attended with such comparatively

small effects. I do not mean merely that so few are converted, but that Christians derive so little profit from an attendance upon it. I invite your attention to the means which seem to me after long and thoughtful consideration, best calculated to secure the benefits which Christ intended that you should derive from the ministrations of the sanctuary. For this purpose I have chosen the exhortation of the Saviour, "Take heed therefore how ye hear;" and in speaking upon it I shall try to use great plainness of speech; for it is not a subject for rhetorical skill, but of the most practical importance.

I begin, then, with saying that in order to derive the greatest benefit from this divinely appointed ordinance, the preparation for the Sabbath must commence with the preceding evening. I speak to your experience when I say that your Sabbath almost always receives its character from the manner in which you have spent Saturday evening. Some have made it a matter of curious speculation whether the Sabbath began at sundown of the preceding day and ended at the same hour of the Sabbath day, or whether holy time began with the morning of the Sabbath and ended at twelve o'clock of the same night. It seems to me that any one who would ask this question from a desire to save all the time that he could for worldly duties, would not be benefitted by the Sabbath at all if the question should be settled either way. To

legislators the question is of some importance. As it regards our private practice it may be sufficient to say that there seems to be no reason why the Sabbath day should not begin like all other days, with sunrise, and end at the next sunrise; for evening and morning, or day and night, in common life are necessary to make one day. The Jews had a preparation for the Sabbath, which was the preceding day, upon which, as it was unlawful for them to light a fire or prepare food on the Sabbath, they made all needful provision for the day of rest. The ceremonial strictness of the Sabbath is now abolished; but its moral obligations are as great as ever. Hence though it is not a violation of any special rule to do particular offices of necessity on the Sabbath, the nature of the day requires that all unnecessary labor should cease, and that the mind should have a season of quiet reflection before the day arrives. Masters should neither labor themselves nor require others to labor to a late hour of the preceding evening. If they say that customers demand it, we reply, the vender of ardent spirits might plead the same excuse for continuing his traffic. A distinction should be made between this evening and all others, by closing business earlier, or to say the least not by two or three hours' later attendance. There *are* professions we know, which require attendance, day and night, and are necessarily attended to on the Sabbath; but that common

occupations should continue longer on the evening before the Sabbath, for the purpose of accommodation, is a subserviency to that public looseness of feeling in regard to the Sabbath to which every Christian, and every one who fears God should refuse to submit. Some will say that laborers who are not discharged till late on Saturday evening must be accommodated. I answer, the experiment has been tried, and it is found that honest and virtuous laborers have had no difficulty in being supplied with all that was necessary for the Sabbath, in proper season. Besides, if men in one branch of business set up the principle, others will be obliged to accommodate themselves to them, and in time a great change will be effected. But if some still complain that they shall displease their patrons; I have only to say, be not afraid of them that kill the body; for Christ has forewarned whom alone you should fear. And if it is replied, that greater profits perhaps are realized by this practice than on any other day or evening, the ready answer to all such worldly calculations is, "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul." I plead for no ceremonial strictness in this thing, for the Sabbath was made for man; but it is a plain matter, that those who go from the bustle and fatigue of the evening or night, immediately to rest, cannot be in such a state of mind for the duties of the coming day as though they had allowed them-

selves time for the preparation of the Sabbath. Our fathers were very strict in this matter; their particularity was indeed in many respects peculiar; but their practice of approaching the Lord's day by gradually ceasing from their labors and worldly employments the day before, was one of the great barriers against the profanation of the Sabbath. Their children learned from their example to reverence Saturday evening because it is so near the Sabbath; and the manner in which Saturday evening is observed by individuals and communities is an unfailing index of their feelings of reverence or irreverence towards the Sabbath. To derive the greatest benefit from this day we must therefore prepare our minds aforetime for its duties.

II. Before we *come* to the House of God, we should always engage in special and earnest private prayer. Every individual should make it a rule to be alone with God for some time before he comes hither, to ask that the Holy Ghost would prepare his mind to receive instruction, admonition, and consolation. He should ask that God who knows the state of his soul would direct some message of His word to him, that either in prayer, or in the hymns, or the sermon, there may be a word in season for his soul. I may here digress so far as to say, it is to be feared that the duty of praying for the minister is not fully understood. It is not for our own sakes that we say in the ear-

nest language of the Bible, Brethren, pray for us. It is for you. A man, for instance, is in the constant daily practice of remembering the minister in his prayers. God hears him. He sees that minister in his study, and perhaps at that very time He suggests some thought to his mind which will be of great benefit to him that prays. The minister may not preach at home the next Sabbath; he may be upon a journey, or at least may not be in his study. But something that he sees or hears, or thinks of, may be sent to him for the especial benefit of that man; and the next time that he preaches, the praying hearer without knowing it, has the answer to his prayer. But upon the Sabbath no one should enter the house of God without having prayed that God would prepare a message for him, and fit his heart to receive it. What solemn assemblies there would be, what hearers, did we know as we look round upon the congregation, that every soul here, even the children, had just come from his knees before God.

A distinguished minister of another country was one Sabbath, waited for, for a long time, by his congregation, till they grew anxious for him. At last one of the officers of the church sent a messenger to inform him that the congregation were assembled. The messenger returned and said that the door of the minister's room was locked, and that there was a person in the room with him, whom the minister was entreating with

great earnestness to accompany him to church. He said that the minister appeared to be in agony, and used this expression with great vehemence.

Soon, however he made his appearance, alone, but when he began to speak, the hearers all knew that it was God with whom he had wrestled and that God was with him. If hearers would thus cry, If thy Spirit go not with me carry me not up hence, and each of them bring Jehovah's presence with them, the House would be filled with his presence, and ministers would cry, "How dreadful is this place." It may be proper here to refer to the propriety of a seasonable attendance upon the preaching of the word, in order that ourselves as well as others may not be disturbed. Every one who knows anything of the subject, knows that it is highly beneficial to have a few moments in the House of God, before entering upon the public services, to compose the mind. This benefit *they* cannot have who come late to public worship. Two great objections may be mentioned to this habit. First, *it is irreverent*. In the morning, the congregation invoke Jehovah's presence in prayer, and in the afternoon, in a hymn of praise. Every one who comes to worship, should therefore be anxious to join in this service; and not interrupt it by entering the house while the congregation are thus engaged. Secondly, It is a serious disturbance to those who come in season to prepare their minds for the service. An

eminent Christian was once asked, How it was that she always managed to be in her seat in good season. Her reply is worthy to be remembered: "It is a part of my religion not to disturb the religion of others."

In order that the preaching itself may have its designed effect, there should be this feeling in regard to the minister, "Send Lord, by whom thou wilt send." I mean, that there should be a resolution on the part of every one to receive profit from any preacher that may appear, and not suffer any peculiarities in him to divert the attention from a search after some spiritual food. That our mode of presenting truth, manner of speaking, or other peculiarities should be adapted to every other mind, it would be unnatural to expect; or that some are so well fitted to speak to this or that audience as to another is not to be supposed; neither would it be far from the truth if we should say that in the opinion of some of the hearers, some who preach have mistaken their profession. I know of no greater unhappiness than to be obliged to listen year after year to an uninteresting and unprofitable preacher. The consciousness of being such a preacher to any individual, joined to a sense of personal unworthiness, and increased by observing the proofs of it in the looks of the hearers, takes away all that comfort and ease in preaching, which most ministers desire to have added to a single, honest, and faithful effort

to serve and please God, rather than men. So that it is possible the minister may suffer as much as the uninterested and dissatisfied hearer. But when the hearer cannot have this reflection to disarm him of his prejudice, and there are many things to prevent his profiting, he should search his own heart, and see if he were in a right state of feeling whether he would have so much reason for complaint. Let him come from his closet, with his soul filled with a sense of his wants, and with a humble desire to receive some instruction to guide him in the way of duty, and he can hardly fail to derive profit from something in every sermon. A spirit of criticism would be disarmed; he would listen to a sermon, not as to a literary performance, but like an immortal spirit almost on the wing for her last flight, receive the message with eternity in view.

Again. In connection with this I may refer to the way in which many listen to preaching, which is very injurious to their religious character. They come to meeting, throwing the whole responsibility upon the preacher, of sanctifying their souls. Previous preparation is rejected, the sermon, they say, will prepare the mind; so that they come with an entire dependance upon means, as if these would exert a sort of spiritual surgery, in cutting off their sins, which they have no heart to do; or by exciting them, and making them weep or tremble for a little while, they think that

improvement and sanctification are making rapid progress. Is it not the general tendency thus to rely on means, on preaching, to do that great and solemn work of preparing the soul for Heaven which can be done only by the private efforts of the soul, assisted, indeed, by this and other instruments? They make one think of a certain feeble and short-lived flower that opens and shuts within one hour of the day. It is a bad sign when a Christian can grow in grace only in sermon time; and yields himself up, to be wrought upon by an exhortation, and without further religious feelings and efforts till the next sermon. He makes flesh his arm, and is therefore like the heath in the desert that seeth not when good cometh, but inhabiteth the parched places in the wilderness.

There is another tendency in hearers that prevents their profit. It is true we cannot but feel an interest in our friends who listen with us to preaching, and hope and pray that particular remarks, may be helped to their conversion. But when we are all the time employed in applying the truth to others, thinking how applicable this remark is to the condition of another, and this admonition, to some one rather than to ourselves, we are like the roof of a house that sheds the shower, instead of a plant that drinks it in to its own nourishment. This is inconsistent with a humble, teachable spirit, and must always prevent

the truth from its designed effect upon our own souls.

It is of great importance how we feel and act immediately after listening to the preaching of the Gospel. It may be safely laid down by every hearer as a great principle to regulate his conduct, for it is the deliberate opinion of President Edwards, perhaps the ablest and most eminent divine that New England ever saw, that when a sermon does a hearer any good it is 'at the time when he listens to it. It is therefore of the greatest importance that we should guard against any thing which will efface the impression just made in our hearts. How easily such impressions may be obliterated is known to us all. As soon as the seed is sown, the birds of the air are ready to gather it up; and then cometh the great adversary and snatcheth it away. All unnecessary conversation should be avoided in going out of the place of worship. There is nothing that jars the feelings of a worshipper so much as to hear a voice that is addressed to another at such a time. There are few cases in which conversation is necessary, and in these we should study to be entirely unobserved. Who can tell but that by speaking to some one who may have been affected by the preaching, you may break in upon a train of serious reflections which uninterrupted might have been for his eternal good? I once saw a person on whom divine truth had apparently produced a

great effect ; he was going away with an arrow in his heart ; a member of the church went to him and engaged with him in conversation, which from the immediate change in his looks any one might have known was not of a tendency to awake religious impressions ; and how much injury was done to that soul, by that slight inadvertency of a friend, perhaps none of us can calculate. My Christian friends, "He that winneth souls is wise ;" that is to say, If you would help to win souls to Christ you must be very circumspect and cautious in your intercourse with them at particular times, and at none more so than after God has been speaking to them, and when the Holy Spirit who is easily grieved away, may be commencing his work of conviction in their hearts.

Of all the suggestions now made there is no one, perhaps more important than the following. Remembering that all the profit which we receive from preaching is gained at the time of hearing ; there should be a solemn and particular questioning with the heart as we go home, and when we have entered the house, What have I heard that is applicable to me ? In what respect may I profit by this sermon ? Do not let this question pass off into a vague musing, and sleepy state of mind ; but just as if we were to make an entry of it in a book, form an answer in the mind, and as the sound of the voice in prayer helps you to pray, speak it out in words :—I see by what I have

heard that I must pray more ; or, I have seen that the character of Christ is infinitely glorious ; or, I must part with this sin ; or, Use this means for the salvation of this friend : or, Realize more than I have done what it is for a soul to be lost forever ; and in this way deduce some particular definition, instruction, or feeling ; which you will preserve and meditate upon for some time. Then to close the whole, and I cannot express the vast importance of this duty, or the fearful extent to which it is neglected, every one should seek retirement, and spend a few moments at least, in special prayer. Then instead of a flood of worldliness sweeping over him, and destroying all his impressions he would secure a deep and abiding impression upon his character that would make him a growing Christian. What a different face would things wear amongst us, if there were only more prayer ! How much greater would be our Christian improvement ; how spiritual and efficient this church ; and many we believe would be converted unto God. What would be the effect now upon each of us, if we knew that every Sabbath, morning and afternoon, within the hour preceding worship, every member of this church was engaged in pouring out his soul in private prayer to God for his blessing upon his word ; and what would be the effect upon the minister ! And what would be the effect upon each of us, as he saw the congregation separating, if he knew they were all going to

prayer ; that in a few moments another cloud of incense might be seen going up from these dwellings to God ! What Sabbaths we should enjoy ! — these different homes thus linked together by united though private prayer, and the hearts of all drawn together by a simultaneous meeting at the Throne of Grace. If such a proposition could now be made, every member of the church would agree to it ; then let me say to each, in the name of the whole, we will thus come to the Throne of Grace at these hours preceding each part of divine service ; and also when we go to our homes : and this we will do not for one day or month or year ; but as long as we live. Yes, our last Sabbath shall be spent in this manner ; and how delightful if arrested by sickness and death during the week, to look back upon the last Sabbath in time spent in this manner. And if any one of us is ever tempted to remit his prayers for one Sabbath, let him ask himself, suppose that on Thursday I should die ; how would I then wish that I had employed the only Sabbath that remained to me before my appearance in the presence of my Judge ? Let every hearer answer that question each Sabbath morning ; perhaps it will abate his curiosity to hear preaching which conscience tells him is another Gospel ; or prevent him from wasting the day in the fields, or in the street, or in labor, or at home ; and it may be, bring him where his soul may be fitted for the world in which

means come to an end, and that which a man soweth, he also reaps.

Whenever I see men wasting the Sabbath in idleness, or engaged in labor of any kind, it always occurs to the mind, How precious, how admirably fitted to prepare the soul for Heaven the Sabbath will appear to a lost spirit. And for one Sabbath, it would give a universe of wealth and pleasure. My hearers, suppose, that we could throw aside the veil that hides eternity; we should there see many who feel thus; and what would they not give for a single opportunity like yours of sitting in the house of God only one hour and hearing the Gospel preached? It is not impossible that some here may be in the same situation, and how soon we cannot tell. Then improve every Sabbath as though its sun were measuring off your closing hours of mercy. Christian, improve every Sabbath, as if on the coming week you were to look back upon it from a dying bed, and the next Sabbath, review it in the light of eternity. Go, at the close of every service, to private prayer; come to every service from your knees, and Heaven will dawn upon your souls, the whole church resemble the church above and sinners be converted unto God.



JANUARY.

THIRD SABBATH MORNING.



FOREIGN MISSIONS.

“Who loved me, and gave himself for me.”—GAL. 2: 20.

THE greater part of the permanent good accomplished in this world is the consequence of love and gratitude to Jesus Christ. It was this which made a certain man the first of the Apostles, the first of the Christians, the first benefactor to his race; and now, while the kingdoms in which he labored have perished, the consequences of his life, swayed by this motive, are flowing abroad over the earth, and were never in such full tide as at the present hour.

The subject of this discourse is, THE POWER OF CHRISTIAN GRATITUDE.

The truths of religion are so various, it makes such universal appeal to the powers and faculties of our nature, that we cannot assign to any one thing an exclusive control over our feelings and conduct: but, as the many lamps of a light-house make one beaming star, and one element rules in them and by them, which is light, so love pervades and blends all the motives and affections of a true Christian, and makes the chief impression upon others. Accordingly, we find that grateful love to his Redeemer is the principal thing which gives direction and effect to the feelings and conduct of the great Apostle to the Gentiles.

This may appear to some too simple, not sufficiently intellectual, and wanting in true greatness, or at least dignity, to make it the spring of actions which have the present and eternal welfare of all men for their aim and end. But it is, nevertheless, dignified and great; it is intellectual, and it is in the best sense simple. The man before whom rhetoricians, metaphysicians, theologians of every school, men in all departments of learning bow, was not ashamed to say that his mind was ruled, in its highest exercises, by love and gratitude to a dying friend. Such a motive for the governing power of the life, none of the princes of this world in the realms of learning knew. Many of them had each a system of his own invention; and among its transcendental mysteries he moved

alone, as the moon walks through misty summits in the sky,

“ Like the wild chamois on her Alpine snow,
Where hunter never climbed ; ”

for their followers did not fully comprehend them. In an age when to be intellectual and passionless was the chief end*—when the power of abstraction was true greatness, and modern brahminical austerities were practiced upon the heart to make it insensible to everything but pure reason—for the chief Apostle of a new system to avow that the influence under which he professed to found a school which would convert every form of philosophy and religion, and bring the thrones of the world into subjection, was love and gratitude to a dying friend, was a step toward sublimity never equaled. We probably know but little of the derision implied in these few words—“ And to the Greeks foolishness ”—by which this great man, casually and without sensibility, expressed the treatment which his life and doctrine met with from the men of his day. It required large moral courage to be deemed by them a fool, and to admit that, in the sense in which they ignorantly applied the term, it was true. “ We are fools,” he said, “ For Christ’s sake.” “ If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him

* “ Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans and of the Stoics encountered him.”—Acts xvii. 18.

become a fool that he may be wise." He passed through those three natural forms of opposition which every good reformer and his cause have endured from before the days of Sanballat, namely, Contempt, Persecution, and, the most to be feared, Compromise. He calmly tells us, "None of these things move me." "Whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God; or whether we be sober, it is for your cause. For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again." This is grateful love to Jesus Christ, and such its power in him who, in obtaining mercy, became a pattern to all who should hereafter believe to life everlasting.

That love, the most powerful passion of the human mind, should be the great moving power in the Christian religion, and in that religion alone, is one of the proofs that this religion is from God. The greatest simplicity is thus imparted to mental philosophy as concerned with the mind in its approaches to God; unspeakable relief is afforded to the uninstructed majority of the race in coming to God, who are thus saved from the necessity of philosophical and casuistical distinctions, by the perfect intelligibleness and naturalness of this motive, and its identity with the highest and most pleasureable emotions of which the mind is capa-

ble. Error is complicated, leads to interminable distinctions, abounds in wearisome exceptions. Truth is simple; the laws of nature are simple; the mechanical powers are simple; inspired language is simple as no other language dares to be, or could be, if it would. True love is simple, and true religion is love, and God is love.

In setting forth the Power of Christian Gratitude, two principal things will be considered as the secret of that power.

I. *The love of God, which awakens this gratitude, comes to us in connection with forgiveness.*

Nothing makes such an impression upon the human heart as love made known to it at the moment of being forgiven. To be met with love when we are subdued with a sense of ill-desert, and submitting to merited punishment; to be loved with a love which seems infinite, not goodwill merely, but delight in us, gives us powerful impressions of generosity and magnanimity. For it flows beyond the humble expectations which we had formed of bare endurance with us, of simple pardon, and swells to the measure of that love which God feels toward one who has never displeased him; yea, and beyond this, for it has a joy in it toward us more than over those who need no forgiveness. Such is not our experience in being forgiven by a fellow-man. Release from the consequences of doing wrong, the restoration of a

good understanding, and of the former civil or friendly intercourse, are all which we expect. But we are taken by surprise, on being forgiven of God, at the discovery of a love toward us for which we can see no sufficient reason, making no account of our ill-desert; nor, which is more surprising, perhaps, having any regard to our own conscious inferiority, but is derived, as we perceive, wholly from the sovereign pleasure of God, who is rich in mercy. So that we find ourselves at once strangely identified with Christ, being not only forgiven but beloved for his sake. Our emotions become too great for utterance, our ideas partake of that beautiful confusion which always finds expression in paradoxes; and we begin to speak of knowing a love which passeth knowledge, and being filled with all the fullness of God.

Though this is not the manner of man when he forgives another, yet we see it and its effect illustrated by a good and judicious parent, and a forgiven child, who, being truly penitent and submissive, is sometimes treated with confidence, perhaps with honor, or whatever else may have been the very thing which he had seemed to forfeit. Such treatment bestowed upon a prisoner, or an enemy, has been known to bind him to the confiding or forgiving party, with a devotion which becomes enthusiasm. It lifts us up from the condition of one merely set free from punishment to that of a dear child; the relation established is not that of

an obliged debtor, but of one who has become ten-fold more a son in consequence of all which has taken place. That best robe, the ring, the fatted calf, those superfluities of love and joy, made that prodigal, we may venture to say, a more devoted son and eminent child of God, than bare forgiveness could have done, a hundred times repeated. Not merely for the reason that a kindness done to a man under the influence of a great sorrow, or a happy change in his condition, makes the deepest impression upon him, but, coming at the moment of forgiveness, the love of God is in such contrast to our fears, it is so noble, Godlike, no wonder that the mind is sometimes overpowered with joy, pleasure becomes amazement, a flood lifts the soul to Heaven, and when it subsides, it has made channels as deep as before it rose high. Here we see, in part, the secret of the Apostle's devotion to Christ, the spring of his feelings and conduct as a Christian missionary: "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." "For whom I have suffered the loss of all things." "I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die for the name of the Lord Jesus." "The life that I live in the flesh I live by the faith, of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

There is one thing more which gives the love

and gratitude excited in the human breast by Christ its supreme power over the heart and life.

II. *Every instance of love to Christ is a case of reconciled affection.*

We are so constituted that alienated love when fully restored, or affection succeeding prejudice and hostility, becomes an all-consuming passion. The mixture of sorrow in it gives it the power of the minor key in music; a sense of having been unjust is like the push of the ocean behind every wave of feeling toward the beloved object. His excellence is heightened and brightened by the previous misapprehension; there is a constant desire to make redress, to go beyond the ordinary measure of appreciation and love.

Every Christian is a converted enemy of God, a foe disarmed and gained over by kindness. "And you that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled." The wisdom of Him who knew what was in man is seen in building up a kingdom with subjects gained in this manner. It was intended to be an empire of love, and that love was intended to be and to do infinitely more than all the forces which control the human passions, or which are set in motion by them; more than the love of conquest, or wealth, or beauty, or pleasure; more than law perfectly obeyed, even in Heaven, had ever achieved. Here is a sublime sight, an empire of free minds swayed by the prin-

ciple of love, and bound by a constancy of attachment which nothing else had ever effected; an empire in which every subject is a subdued rebel and reconciled enemy, and for that reason a better impersonation of love, even, than the seraph who says, "Lo these many years have I served thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment." To whom his God replies with a fullness of love, in which, however, a certain quality is wanting which it receives by us: 'Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. But thy brother was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'

It was this feature in the kingdom of Christ, its being built on reconciled affections, which struck the mind of Napoleon Bonaparte in his meditations at St. Helena with great force, and led him to say things which no Christian divine, even, or devout man has surpassed for strength and beauty of expression. By some marvellous power exerted upon the mind of that man, he was led to utter such words as the following,* which I cannot do better for my subject than to quote:

"How should a Jew, the particulars of whose

* From the translation of a French tract printed in Paris, entitled "NAPOLEON." Its credibility is attested by Rev. Dr. G. De Felice, Professor in the Theological Seminary at Montauban, France, in a letter to the New York Observer, April 16, 1842. Count de Montholon is also known to have related similar expressions used by Napoleon, and these have likewise been published.

history are better attested than that of any of his contemporaries—how should he alone, the son of a carpenter, give out all at once that he was God, the Creator of all things? He arrogates to himself the highest adoration. He constructs his worship with his own hands, not with stones but with men. You are amazed at the conquests of Alexander. But here is a conqueror who appropriates to his own advantage, who incorporates with himself, not a nation, but the human race. Wonderful! the human soul with all its faculties becomes blended with the existence of Christ. And how? By a prodigy surpassing all other prodigies he seeks the love of men, the most difficult thing in the world to obtain; he seeks what a wise man would fain have from a few friends, a father from his children, a wife from her husband, a brother from a brother—in a word, the heart; this he seeks, this he absolutely requires, and he gains his object. Hence I infer his divinity. Alexander, Cæsar, Hannibal, Louis XIV., with all their genius, failed here. They conquered the world, and had not a friend.

“Christ speaks, and at once generations become his by stricter, closer ties than those of blood, by the most sacred, most indissoluble of all unions. He lights up the flame of a love which consumes self-love, which prevails over every other love.

“The founders of other religions never conceived of this mystical love, which is the essence

of Christianity, and is beautifully called charity. Hence it is that they have struck upon a rock. In every attempt to effect this thing, namely, *to make himself beloved*, man deeply feels his own impotence. So that Christ's greatest miracle undoubtedly is the reign of charity. All who sincerely believe in him taste this wonderful, supernatural, exalted love. The more I think of this, I admire it the more. And it convinces me absolutely of the divinity of Christ.

"I have inspired multitudes with such affection for me, that they would die for me. God forbid that I should compare the soldier's enthusiasm with Christian charity, which are as unlike as their cause. But after all, my presence was necessary, the lightning of my eye, my voice, a word from me ; then the sacred fire was kindled in their hearts. I do, indeed, possess the secret of this magical power which lifts the soul, but I could never impart it to any one ; none of my generals ever learnt it from me ; nor have I the secret of perpetuating my name and love for me in the hearts of men, and to effect these things without physical means.

"Now that I am at St. Helena, now that I am alone, chained to this rock, who fights and wins empires for me ? Where are any to share my misfortune, any to think of me ? Who bestirs himself for me in Europe ? Who remains faithful to me ; where are my friends ? Yes, two or three of

you, who are immortalized by this fidelity, ye share, ye alleviate my exile. Such is the fate of great men. So it was with Cæsar and Alexander, and I too am forgotten; and the name of a conqueror and an emperor is a college theme; our exploits are tasks given to pupils by their tutor, who sits in judgment upon us, awarding us censure or praise. Such is soon to be the fate of the great Napoleon. What a wide abyss between my deep misery and the eternal kingdom of Christ, which is proclaimed, loved, adored, and which is extending over all the earth! Is this death; is it not life rather? The death of Christ is the death of a God."

Two of the principal sources of the power of Christian gratitude then, are, that the love of Christ, which excites this gratitude, comes in connection with forgiveness; and that love to Christ is, in every instance, the fruit of reconciled affection.

I proceed to make application of what has now been said, to our great work.

I. THE OBJECT OF FOREIGN MISSIONS IS THE CONVERSION OF THE WORLD, BY LOVE, INTO AN EMPIRE OF LOVE.

We say to nations, We seek not yours, but you; and you not for any advantage resulting to us, but because we love you; and the reason why we love

you ; is, that God has so loved us ; and beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. We therefore forsake our native land, and give away the whole of life, all that is precious in home and country, simply because we love you, and therefore seek to do you the greatest possible good, which is, to make you love God, and to be loved of him. Scattered among you, far and near, behold the graves of those who for your sakes have foregone the privilege of sleeping with kindred dust ! Beneath that tree, which is permanently bent as with sorrow by the prevailing wind, and almost within reach of your tides, lies buried a wife dying suddenly in one of her missionary voyages, and finding a grave at midnight by her husband's hands, who parts with her there, to go with a load of sorrow known only to God, and finish his work of love to you. Look over yon simple fence, and see the graves of men whose youth, manhood, and declining years, were spent that they might preach among you the unsearchable riches of Christ. They gained among you no inheritance of lands, or flocks, or, houses or money ; they carried neither purse nor scrip for this purpose, but having food and raiment supplied by us, your friends, they were therewith content. We come to you as God the Saviour came to us ; he was found of us who sought him not ; freely we have received, we freely give, the blessings of Heaven to you. All this we do for him who

loved us and gave himself for us. For we are not our own; we are bought with a price. He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again.

Could we summon from its heavenly rest, this morning, one soul whom we have succeeded in winning to God, and behold upon its face the impress of beauty and peace which the experience of a few years in Heaven have made upon it, and hear its little history of heathenism, and of rescue from it by us; and then if its voice should break forth in the strains of some hymn well known beyond the stars as well as here, we should thank God and take courage. But if all whom our love has saved should come hither from the skies, there would be scenes of love and joy here, which it is well for our contentment and fitness for our work that we know only by faith and not by sight. We multiply continually the number of holy and happy spirits in Heaven. At first we heard of almost every instance in which a soul was redeemed from among the heathen; but now these things, and certain great events in the progress of our work which once would have astounded us, pass on without much surprise. So in the day time, no doubt, the coruscations of the Aurora are in the heavens, great meteors fly there, and constellations wheel along the sky, but the light of day eclipses them. The sun of millenial glory is so near its

rising, that such events as the national independence of the Sandwich Islands, the Bible given to one whole nation after another in its own tongue, toleration in Turkey maintained for us by the very sword of Mohammed, hardly awaken much surprise. Thus victories of peace proceed through the earth; and, as this kingdom advances, every conquest is the conquest of one heart more which is forever to love God and man, the opening of a new fountain of bliss springing up unto everlasting life.

Let one incident bring to view the nature and effects, upon a larger scale, of this enterprise of love. Two African chiefs came suddenly upon each other at a spring in the wilderness. They had been deadly foes, and so had their tribes. They looked at each other, and each thought that some change had happened to his enemy, till at last one of them smiled, and the other offered a sign of friendship; and then they embraced, and told each the other what Christ had done for him. Such is the empire of love which we are seeking to extend, glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will toward men. Its incidental influences are stupendous; but as the serviceable works of God are clothed with beauty which is no part of their main design and yet by many are mistaken for it, as the phosphorescence in the wake of a ship is not mentioned in the ship's inventory or plan of the voyage, so with affluent kindness

the religion of Jesus sheds beauty and prosperity every where while seeking to promote our spiritual good, but which are no more its chief object, as worldly minds suppose, than those handkerchiefs and aprons which were borne to the sick from the body of Paul, were the chief purpose in his great commission. These incidental fruits of Christianity alone are worth vastly more than the cost of the whole enterprise, and like the sun and rain they are the means of wealth to evil and unthankful men, some of whom neglect, and others, alas! revile that religion, with its institutions, which incidentally gives them their power to get wealth.

Is not war between this country and Great Britain more improbable by her union with us in our Turkish missions? By this annexation of Great Britain to America, not only without resistance on the part of the mother country but at her request, we have done more than all the modern schemes of annexation will accomplish for the good of mankind, should they all succeed. Over those waters where the gallant men of both countries have won and lost in battle with each other, let the ships of the two countries, as they pass, soon unfold those words written forever on their flags: "HE IS OUR PEACE."

One thing deserves special mention, as a fruit of this empire of love, because it lies at the foundation of almost every thing in human welfare. The rights of the individual are recognized and

respected in proportion as Christianity prevails. Indeed, it is only when Christ is known and obeyed, that men cease to be designated merely as so many muskets. The explanation is this: The Gospel makes every thing of the individual soul, illustrates its infinite intrinsic worth, lays vast responsibilities upon it, denies the right of the church and priest to interpose between it and God, and makes each man feel and say of Christ, "Who loved me, and gave himself for me." We claim that this is the origin of that all-important difference in the esteem which is accorded to man as an individual in different parts of the earth, viz.: the value which the Gospel teaches each man to set upon his own soul, and that of every other man. Out of this grows the public sentiment that men are not made for their rulers, but their rulers for them, and both for God, so that absolute monarchies and despotisms will be impossible, when men learn the infinite price paid as the ransom of the soul. "This is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." "Even so, it is not the will of your Father which is in Heaven that one of these little ones should perish." The end of all is to gather together a society of which every one shall be a reconciled enemy, in whose whole consciousness, forever, this shall be the prevailing feeling, that he has been loved with the love of God, that his Creator and Redeemer have made him their personal friend, having come in

unto him, and supped with him, and he with them, making his endless being one hymn of praise to the God of redemption, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, thus ennobling him in his own esteem ; for “since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honorable, and I have loved thee.” When you think of a society in which the history of each individual will contain sufficient, if fully disclosed, to secure the highest love to God from every intelligent being, that salvation from hell and the possession of Heaven on the part of each were enough to warrant all that Christ could suffer ; when you consider that the multitudes are without number of whom this will be true, and that the disinterested love which redeemed them has lighted up a flame of the same love in each of them toward every fellow creature, and that in the same sense in which God is love, all his attributes conspiring to express love, Heaven is to be forever a world of love, being the mirror of God, and that the accumulating joy and bliss of Heaven are expressed to our imagination, faintly indeed, but as far as we could understand it, by telling us that if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled we shall be saved by his life, and then consider that the simple object of our institution and of our assembly is to people this Heaven, brethren and sisters in Christ, fellow-heirs in this service and its reward, the work in which we are engaged

is unequaled in interest and sublimity, we may venture to say, in the universe of God! If there are angels by whose hands the walls of Heaven were built and its foundation garnished with all manner of precious stones, its golden pavement laid, its gates of pearl were hung, I would rather be the means of bringing one soul to enjoy that Heaven than to see my name in burning sapphires as its architect. But, "they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever." For if any thing can add a joy to all this, it is the thought that each of us may contribute to such bliss. The greatest honors and privileges of an earthly kind are within reach of the few; but, blessed be God, his empire of love is such that every one may make his character and influence felt without limits, in proportion as they are pure and good. No peculiarities in my circumstances prevent me from loving my fellow men as Christ loved me. The honor which comes from man I may fail to obtain; I may be disappointed, desolation may waste my earthly happiness, but no one can hinder me from consecrating my whole heart to Christ, my talents, my property, my children, my efforts, to the work of persuading each fellow-creature that Christ loved him and gave Himself for him. I can go from house to house with this love of Christ, and kindle it from heart to heart. I can make every depraved creature feel

that I love him because Christ has loved me ; I can leave all that I love and go to regions beyond the present boundary of Christian missions and win men to Christ and Heaven—so free are the honors of this empire, so omnipotent is that love which is the ruling principle in the heart of its King and of every subject. The object of Foreign Missions, let it be repeated, is, the conversion of the world by love, into an empire of love.

II. THE LOVE OF CHRIST IS OUR RULE, AND ITS RESULTS TO HIM SHOULD BE OUR ENCOURAGEMENT, IN THE MISSIONARY WORK.

The love of Christ is our rule. We love to indulge, as the Bible does, in military figures, in speaking of the kingdom of Christ, and of the way in which it is to be built up ; but we must guard against the sternness and harshness with which they may insensibly affect our feelings. We must remember, as the Bible teaches us, that all the conquests of Christ are conquests of men's hearts, and that every enemy of God will be subdued, if at all, by convincing his understanding, and winning him to Christ. The Book of Daniel, filled with prophecies of Messiah's reign, written in captivity, and therefore enhancing to the vision of the prophet the times of Christ, as the cloud that covered Tabor gave the raiment of Christ a more exceeding whiteness—that wonderful book of prophecy concludes with a chapter which contains

a benediction upon those who "turn many to righteousness;" thus holding up to view the manner in which that kingdom, whose testimony is the spirit of prophecy, would be promoted, and the reward of those who should labor to establish it.

Legislation cannot be substituted for love, as the primary means of influencing men for their moral and spiritual good. Legislation, just and wise, is nevertheless one of the chief munitions of public and private virtue, nor can we properly refuse its aid in morals and religion. But legislation, as a means of converting the hearts of men to God, we all know, has been declared by divine authority pointing to a divine precedent to be ineffectual. There never was a better law than the moral law, nor was legislation ever attended with circumstances better fitted to secure the perfect love and obedience of men. But in that beautifully simple way in which the Bible relates the thoughts of God as of a man, this is spoken of as an experiment that failed, leading the lawgiver to devise another expedient. In that familiar passage, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh," we have a striking confession of weakness even in the law of God, on account of strength superior to it in the stubbornness of the human heart. But the law of God still holds its place, only there is a Gospel added to make the law efficacious; for the expedient resorted to for the purpose of reaching the transgressor by the

atonement, aims to re-establish the law of God as the rule of duty. God has taught us that he himself, with his holy, just and good law, cannot persuade men; and shall we be wiser than God? We must have a Gospel in our hearts and upon our lips, when we have tables of stone in our hands; else the temptation which befell the Jewish lawgiver, descending from Sinai, will be ours. There was truth in the law by Moses, and no grace; but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. Let no man decry wise legislation, expecting of it more than it can in the nature of things accomplish, and then refusing its aid. On the other hand, they who rely wholly on the enunciation of right and the denunciation of wrong to make men just and good, do not copy after the divine pattern. We hardly need go beyond the ordinary knowledge which we have of human nature, to illustrate this remark.* To prevent the mortifica-

* It is forcibly shown even by one of the common precepts of rhetoric, derived from the laws of the human mind. A master in that art, Abp. Whately, tells us, "It is possible and dangerous to write too forcibly. Some," he says, "conscious of having been the slaves or the supporters of such prejudices as are thus held up to contempt, not indeed by disdainful language, but simply by being placed in a very clear light, and of having overlooked truths which, when thus clearly explained and proved, appear perfectly evident even to a child, will consequently be stung by a feeling of shame, passing off into resentment, which stops their ears against argument. They could have borne, perhaps, to change their opinion, but not so to change it as to tax that opinion with the greatest folly."

tion and shame which are the natural result of an awakened conscience from destroying us, God, who is rich in mercy, and who knows perfectly how to influence free agents, comes to us in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. He overcomes that self-abhorrence, which we project from ourselves, and transfer to his feelings towards us, by showing us the divine sufferer at Pilate's bar and upon the cross, numbered with the transgressors, bearing the sins of many, and making intercession for the transgressors. No words of mere upbraiding are heard—no epithets of contempt stinging us in proportion as they are deserved—distinguished sinners are not hung in effigy—there are no life-like pictures of our folly and shame confounding us, and driving us to despair; but mercy and hope stand nigh, "lest the spirit should fail before me and the souls which I have made." If with grief he tells us, "Thou hast brought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices, but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities;" he does not delay to

Thus the very triumphant force of the reasoning adduced, seems to harden them against admitting the conclusion; much as one may conceive Roman soldiers desperately holding out an untenable fortress to the last extremity, from apprehension of being made to pass under the yoke by the victors, should they surrender."

add, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for my name's sake, and will not remember thy sins." He who knows by experience how God has dealt with his will, ought to know how to influence every other human will; and so far as we mistake here, we bring our own Christian experience, or temper, into suspicion.

Apply what has been said to one great labor which presents itself in our work, the removal of that most formidable object in the way of Christianity, Oriental Caste. The pride of the human heart is concentrated there; the customs of ages are a wall round about it; the fiercest and most virulent human passions stand guard over it. Catechisms, creeds, treatises, church censures, may do their part in enlightening the understanding; but there is only one thing which will be to it what converting grace is among the means of grace. We possess the secret of success. "And he took the cup and gave thanks, and gave it to them, and said, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." The spirit which dictated these words shed abroad in the hearts of Christian missionaries and pervading their influence, the necessity of drinking the same cup, or rather the willingness to do so, under the experience of forgiven sin, and gratitude and love to Christ, will at last make a large part of the inhabitants of the earth, who are now aliens to each

other, one in Christ Jesus. Divine wisdom, which made eating and drinking the method of commemorating the Saviour's death, has prepared the way of reconciliation, and divine love will lead into it those whom no persuasion or force could bring together. He who rose from the table and washed the disciples' feet, will, by the spirit which he has given us, bring the whole human family to his table, as he also will to one fold and one Shepherd.

In connection with this subject, it is easy to understand why truly good missionaries possess such a heavenly spirit, why they are every man's friends, why they have such simple piety, and why their eloquence moves our assemblies as they are seldom moved by words from other men. To be truly good missionaries, they must of necessity have the same mind which was in Christ, loving their fellow-men for Christ's sake; for nothing else but fanaticism or powerful worldly motives can sustain men in such a work. A truly good missionary is therefore seldom a one-sided man; he is not possessed by one inferior idea; while he has his infirmities, and his antipathies, and his favorite schemes, he cannot be a radical, a man of extreme views, an advocate of measures to be immediately and at all hazards enforced, for his work among the heathen would soon cure his radicalism or drive him home; but apart from this, true Christian charity exerts a conservative influence upon the character, and a corresponding effect upon the

temper and manners. How foreign from our impressions of that great reformer, the Apostle Paul, is wholesale denunciation, and the vituperative style of writing, insolent manners and speech! "For though we walk after the flesh," he tells us, "we do not war after the flesh." If there be men, (would you pardon me if I do not add, women?) whose spirit and manners are models, they are to be found among Christian missionaries. Human character has seldom risen higher in this world than we have seen and loved it in them. Some of the missionary Bishops of the Church of England have been among the most humble and Christ-like men of all who ever wore the mitre. We have wondered, perhaps, at the beautiful simplicity of piety in the converts from among the heathen, and some have thought its flavor was derived from the soil. Not so; but from the simple-hearted missionaries, determined not to know any thing among them but Jesus Christ and him crucified. To them the controversies which vex their brethren at home are comparatively nothing; but daily in the temple, and from house to house, they teach and preach Jesus Christ. Who is to be our next President—which crisis in our national affairs for the past half century was certainly to be the last—the preparation for the blending of parties—the trouble and sorrow which reformers, with their more enlightened perceptions, have with their more insensible brethren,

and the necessity which these brethren have of replying as Job did to his friends, "What ye know, the same do I know also; I am not inferior unto you;"—the controversy in the newspapers which absorbs all hearts and tongues, but, like March, "comes in like a lion, and goes out like a lamb;"—all, in short, for which we are disquieted in vain, instead of worrying and perplexing them, has either the effect of the distant surf which deepens repose, or it awakens thoughts of mingled sadness and gratefulness, like the booming of cannon on a battle-field far off. As they look upon their humble converts, with their simple-hearted faith, they dread the approach of the time when the corruptions of Christianity shall reach even them, when the errors and divisions of Christendom shall be transplanted there, and when the love of many waxing cold, which here leads to contention, shall suffer the same chill in those new households of faith.

In helping Christian missionaries to build up this empire of love, perhaps we have not sufficiently considered our duty to cultivate and encourage in ourselves, as a Christian community, only those things which it will be safe to transplant. We are responsible to the heathen world not only for missionaries, but for a healthful Christianity yet to be translated. We are the mother country to those young Christian states, who will emulate our virtues and copy our vices. As the

surest way of becoming an example to the churches and communities which we are assisting to form in heathen and pagan nations, we must be imbued with the spirit and be actuated by the motive set forth in our text and subject, and exemplified by the great Apostle and all the true successors to this day. This will be in proportion as "we have known and believed the love which God hath to us." He who conducts a public disputation in the spirit of Christ, he who makes his newspaper breathe that spirit, the preachers who abstain from unfruitful subjects and hold forth Christ crucified, the Christians who by deeds of love fill the house with the odor of their ointment, as, for example, by adopting and cherishing the child of a dear missionary brother and sister who have known that great anguish of parting with their children for the sake of their work, do more to convert the heathen, and confirm the converts among them, than all the orators and scientific men of Christendom. It is most instructive, it is a rebuke to us, to notice what deeds Christ emblazons, what kind of people he rewards with a place in the New Testament—the widow with her two mites, the weeping woman anointing him for his burial. Wherever the Gospel is preached, that which these have done is by his appointment to be told as a memorial of them. A grateful, loving heart, with Christ for its object, comprises everything which is essential to success in this work.

Giving ceases to be regarded as a duty, and becomes a joy. As certain flowers are quick to hear and greet the voices of spring, so there are hearts in many churches which are sensitive to every appeal in behalf of a good object, and we find that these are hearts in which Christ dwells by faith. And, on the contrary, as the mimosa on the prairie shuts itself up whenever a horse's hoof strikes the ground at a distance from it, so there are hearts which recoil and close themselves at such appeals; and how dwelleth the love of God in them! He only who can say from the heart, Our Father which art in Heaven, instinctively adds, Hallowed be thy name. The more we love him and are grateful to him, the more will our thoughts and feelings be absorbed in direct efforts to make him known and loved, and these impassioned words of an ardent woman, which Cowper has translated, will then express our feelings:

“O, reign, wherever man is found,
Jesus, beloved and divine;
Then am I rich, and then alone,
When every human heart is thine.

“A thousand sorrows pierce my soul
To think that all are not thy own;
O, be adored from pole to pole!
Where is thy zeal? Arise! be known!”

Having considered our rule of duty, we proposed also to consider the encouragement in the

results to Christ of his love to men. By the results to Christ of his love, I mean particularly the feelings toward him of all who are redeemed and saved by his love. Contemplate Christ for a few moments, therefore, in his daily life, and the whole manner of that life.

He had the best opportunity to enjoy every thing which the world could give. It was no illusion which passed before his mind on the exceeding high mountain, though the tempter there overrated his own power. What wealth he might have acquired; what realms he might have annexed to his temporal throne; what luxuries could the earth, air and seas have brought to his table; what a home of love and joy could he have filled with all manner of delights; what a benefactor to the human intellect in the cause of learning might he have become, by being himself absorbed in philosophy and the arts! O, thou man of sorrows! How different from this was the manner of thy life! He made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant. Every morning, as he regained his consciousness, there came over him, no doubt, that shadow which falls so drearily upon the waking thoughts of one in trouble, before he recollects what the burden is which is waiting for him. No retirement and rest soothed and refreshed him, except as he found it in wildernesses and mountains. We read that on one occasion he went down into Capernaum, he

and his mother and his disciples ; but there is significance in the seemingly unimportant remark of the historian, who adds, " He continued there not many days." Love, gushing from hearts bound to him by the tenderest ties, did not tempt him to linger at their cool moss-grown sides ; but we find, in one saying of his, the key to his whole life : " The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." To court the favor of others, to live on their sympathy in his troubles, or on their smiles, to be glad or sad according as he was caressed or slighted, was the opposite of his manner of life. When the proprietor of an orchard visits it, he knows what trees to shake ; he gathers the best of the fruits. Here was one, the world was made by him, who refused every tree, plucked no clusters, forgetting himself, and living only for the good of others. That he was not insensible to pleasure, we need not say ; indeed, we are expressly told that it was for the very highest pleasure, for the joy set before him, that he endured the cross, despising the shame.

Nor will we allow that Christ, though a man of sorrows, was an unhappy man. Does James break in upon us with a smiling face, and, hardly waiting to finish his salutatory words, exclaim, " My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations ? " The dreamer in Bedford Jail was not an unhappy man. Does not every greatly

afflicted child of God, who is resigned and patient say that the religious experience which comes by his Heavenly Father's discipline is worth all that he suffers? Is he not like one who gathers precious stones upon a stormy shore, and like a branch laden heavily with fruit, when the vine-dresser's knife has purged it? "Behold, he cometh with clouds," is true of Christ in many of his approaches to us for our highest spiritual happiness. What thoughts and feelings Jesus must have had amidst his sorrows, what clear insight into things, what companionship of beautiful truths in his solitude and darkness, like a mountain-top "visited all night with troops of stars!" He who meditated the Sermon on the Mount, those parables, and more than all, those works of love which filled one day after another—was it possible for him to be unhappy? "I am not alone, for the Father is with me." And if that to his sincere follower is not only consolation but joy, what must it have been to the Beloved? Nevertheless, he was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. For us he was smitten, stricken of God, and afflicted.

Now look at the results to him, and the great reward. He is the object of the most intense love which ever fills the human breast. Those who love him have suffered every thing for him, and for refusing to deny him. The slow preparations at the stake, the wife and children looking on, the

amphitheatre and the lions, the sack filled with serpents, the body smeared with honey for the wasps, stoning, and sawing asunder, and casting down headlong, tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril and sword, only made them rejoice that they were counted worthy to suffer for his name. Having obtained redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, the sacred writer, following the intense language of the Saviour with respect to eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of Man, tells us, "They washed their robes, and made them white in his blood," expressing the perfect fellowship and identification which they had with him in his sufferings. What noise of a multitude is this! I see a procession, ten thousand deep, moving with harps and songs toward a Man upon a throne. They will not cast so many crowns at his feet! It is done. O, can he be worthy of all this? "Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood."

"Can this be he who used to stray
A pilgrim on the world's highway,
Oppressed by power and mocked by pride,
The Nazarene, the Crucified?"

I understand it now. This was "the joy set before him;" for this he "came not to be ministered unto but to minister;" for this he "took upon him the form of a servant;" and this is

“the oil of gladness above thy fellows;” and “he that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.” There never is to be, there never can be, an object of greater love in the universe than Jesus Christ; and this love is to grow deeper, and to rise higher, with the increasing knowledge of what it is to be redeemed and saved. This living not to one’s self and the consequences of it have their example in him, and he has taught us the secret of it in these words, which he verified by his own experience: “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life, shall lose it; but he that hateth his life for my sake, and the gospel’s, the same shall save it.”

Three things press strongly for utterance in view of what has now been said,

First. *Every Christian possesses that which Christian Missions seek to bestow upon the heathen and pagan world.*

It has great power to awaken Christian gratitude when you reflect, If I am a Christian, all that Christ did, all that Christians do, for the world, I have experienced. You are partaker of that change of heart which lies at the foundation of every spiritual blessing, and which it is the first object of Christian missions to effect in the hearts of men. Whatever this Gospel through the power of the Holy Ghost may confer upon the

whole earth, it cannot do more in its beginning for any soul than it has done for you. The whole secret of religion, the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven, are wholly yours, no less than they are or can be those of any human being. Redemption is not a dividend to which the whole human race is a divisor and the quotient your little share; but God is yours; Christ loved you, and gave himself for you; the Holy Spirit, after that you believed, sealed you; and severally they say to you, "Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine." Two things contend in your bosom for the supremacy as you think of this, Gratitude on your own account, and Hope for the world. Having freely received that which it is the sole object of this great enterprise to impart, and knowing that there are millions capable of all of which you are capable, you do not need, you will not expect one word of exhortation; the power of Christian gratitude in your hearts makes it unnecessary to add one word of exhortation. If the Saviour himself were visibly present, would he need to exhort you? But stretching his hand over you would he not simply say, "Peace be unto you; as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." Hope for the world may well be confident and joyful in those in whom God has done all which he has done in you. Did Jesus seek you 'when a stranger, wandering from the fold of God?' Was that heart broken, and that

will subdued? Did all those secret, crimson sins become as wool, as snow? What hinders the universal triumph of divine grace? Take up the Apostle's doxology: "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly, above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end."

Secondly. *It will be a great loss not to have shared in the work of Christian Missions.*

There is to be an hour when the mediatorship will be finished, and the sufferings of Christ will cease to redeem a soul. Jesus will have reigned—all enemies will have been put under his feet. Then the question will be, Who were co-workers with him? All our actions here, even our benevolent acts, will be tried by this—Ye did it, or ye did it not, unto me. Life, then, will appear useful or useless, according as we promoted the ascendancy of Christ over the hearts of men, and in proportion as the power of Christian gratitude constrained us. Then will come the day of praise to Christian martyrs, faithful missionaries, parents who parted with endeared children for Christ's sake, private contributors whose love made their humble gifts exceeding great; and on every hand sights of resplendent beauty and signs of special joy among the redeemed will excite the question, Who are these, and whence came they?

But of some on whom the Christian religion

and its institutions have indirectly conferred wealth and honor, Christ will be compelled to say that they did not, from love to him, or from real interest in his cause, give him so much as the value of the nails which held him to the cross for them and for the world. The widow's mite could have paid for those nails, without which how could the Scripture be fulfilled that thus it must be? So that we cannot say that any thing which we give to Christ, or withhold from him, is a trifle. But think, you that are rich, or learned, or greatly honored, how inconsiderable you will become, if your name is not identified with the cause and kingdom of Jesus Christ. No promise ever had a more conspicuous fulfillment than this: "I will set him on high, because he hath known my name." Whoever identifies himself with Jesus Christ, the Saviour himself says, (but the strongest faith pauses at the word,) "He shall sit with me on my throne." Few, comparatively, know who wrote the Oratorios of Israel in Egypt, Samson, Saul, and Judas Maccabeus. Handel would not have made himself universally beloved, and his name every where fragrant, by those compositions; but he wrote the Messiah; and now, while there are hearts that cry, I know that my Redeemer liveth, and worship him whose name is Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, the name of Handel will twine itself like an evergreen around

those adorable names; and of all who heard the sweetest singer of our age, a great part will remember her as much as for any thing, for this, that she sung, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." Whoever identifies himself in any way with Christ, makes himself immortal. You may be among the first of your kind in every thing else; but if even the nation and the kingdom which will not serve Christ shall perish, what will become of you? A great funeral may solemnize your departure from among men; but there is a second death, and your name and expectation will perish. No great assembly in the other world will record their sense of irreparable calamity at your loss; no Pleyel's Hymn from angels and saints will follow you as you lie down in sorrow, nor requiems speak of your return while they mourn your departure. "As from the shaft the sky no scar retains," so your unbelief and ingratitude will leave Heaven perfect in beauty and happiness, its numbers full, its separating gulf impassable. We, the members of Societies for Propagating the Gospel, we, the missionaries of the cross, we, the converts of heathen and pagan lands, join, and as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, Be ye reconciled to God. Appeals will be made to you in his name, this year, for your aid in spreading the Gospel through the earth. Take a gift, be it much or little, but according to your ability; go in secret and offer it to Christ; make

it a bond of love and gratitude between yourself and him, and so begin to identify your interests with his ; in which case your influence will have no end, and no spirit in Heaven may be happier through all eternity than you. Now is the time to be serviceable to Christ and his cause. The cry for the Gospel comes to us with every arrival from the East ; the God of battles is our King and Head ; armies are preparing the way before his Gospel ; kings shall serve him, all nations shall call him blessed. As his kingdom grows, every thing which promotes human welfare advances ; the earth shall yield her increase ; wealth, learning, arts, are bringing their honors to Christ. Come, for the world is coming to Christ.

“ See how from far, upon the eastern road,
The star-lit wizards haste, with odors sweet.
O run, prevent them with thy humble ode,
And lay it lowly at his blessed feet.
Have thou the honor first thy Lord to greet,
And join thy voice unto the angel choir,
From out his altar touched, with hallowed fire.”

Finally. *The sure success of this empire of love should influence the plans and efforts of the Friends of Missions.*

We should give large room to faith, and not be governed by the distrustful, wary spirit of trade, but rely more on the Christian feelings of our contributors, studying the best ways of appealing to those feelings, assured that in the promises of God

and in the Christian gratitude of every child of God, we have a warrant for every plan and expenditure which sound judgment shall approve. For the success of this work is the success of the eternal counsels of God. There are no chapters in the Old Testament better suited to awaken astonishment than those in Joshua, where the Most High directs the leader of Israel to partition the yet unconquered land of Canaan among the tribes, and the tribes proceed to cast lots for their shares. But do they not know that they are entering upon the most fearful of wars, a war of extermination, in which men are to fight for their homes and the graves of their fathers, and will die upon those graves rather than yield one inch of their soil? Walled cities, an enemy familiar with the ambuscades and fastnesses of the country, nine hundred chariots of iron belonging to one king, giants not only for leaders but as common soldiers, all are nothing to this Israelitish troop, emerging from a desert. The shout of a king is among them. There is no such thing as chances of war; the land is marked out, the lot is drawn, the country is theirs before the battles are fought. So, thou Church of God, all things are yours, whether the world, or whatever is essential to its conquest for Christ! But as the decrees of Heaven and the divine partition of Canaan did not supersede battles, but nerved the hearts and arms of the warring tribes, we should draw encour-

agement from the prophecies and promises respecting the universal reign of Christ, and strive according to his working which worketh in us mightily. Despondency shall never whisper its chilling words in our ears; for all the events of the world, and all the vicissitudes which we meet with in our work, will only promote the grand design. Looking at a distant rock-bound promontory one morning at sunrise after a stormy night, I saw that every breaker with its surf was clothed in the colors of the rainbow. It was the natural operation of the laws of light, which every one sees under the same conditions. But having made the discovery, it was a joy which was new every morning, when the sun appeared after a storm, to feast the eyes with that vision, the sea troubled, but not a wave proceeding from it which did not clothe itself in beautiful resemblance to the bow in the cloud. It was as though the sea itself, "the melancholy main," were one depository of hidden beauty, proclaimed by every wave that lashed the shore. So, I thought, is it with the whole history of the dealings of God with his Church, and with every member of it. Could we but take that glass of faith which is the evidence of things not seen, we should behold every affliction and trouble, all those "footsteps" of God which "are not known," covered, like these footsteps of the sea upon the shore, with the emblem of hope. "Light is sown for the righteous, and

gladness for the upright in heart ;” and every billow seen by the rising sun has more of beauty and glory in proportion to its depth and length and height. Courage, then, fellow-laborers, everywhere ! Receive the hand of fellowship, brethren of every name, companions in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ ! Let the storm-bred mire of sectarian and sectional feeling henceforth and forever disappear ; and let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, and we, like the ocean, its waves many, its waters one, roll to every shore the story of redeeming love. We are building an empire of love ; our motive is gratitude and love ; the fruit of our labor is love ; our spirit and temper shall be love ; Jerusalem, our happy home, is a home of love ; and there the only song in which every nation and kindred and tongue and people can unite will be, Redeeming Love.



JANUARY.

THIRD SABBATH AFTERNOON.



THE GRACE OF GIVING.

“—I seek not yours but you.” — 2 COR. 12: 14.

PAUL had earnest desires and offered earnest prayers for the completeness of Christian character in his Christian friends. He knew the human heart well enough to know this,—that the giving of money is one of the greatest means of Christian excellence; that the motives and disposition and feelings under the influence of which a man gives liberally to his God and Saviour are a proof of perfectness in Christian character, as they surely are. If a man gives liberally of his money to his God and Saviour from right motives, he is no common Christian. As he who governs his tongue is able to control every passion, and is

in his behaviour a perfect man, so he whose heart and hand are opened by love to his Redeemer to contribute liberally of his property to the cause of religion, is accepted and beloved of God. I ask your attention to only one quotation from Paul upon this point, and it will suggest others. In the ninth chapter of this epistle, he is commending Corinthian Christians for their generous contributions for poor saints in distant places. Then he says, "For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God; whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the Gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men."

My subject is indicated by the following proposition :—

The right use of property is a great means of piety.

Piety is love and consecration to God. Where this love extends to all the habits and pursuits, governs all the views and feelings, constitutes the great principle of the life, a man is pious. The difference in the piety of different Christians is that some are more completely under the influence of love to God than others; in some, certain things are not brought into subjection to the law of love. Selfishness, or in other words, the love of self-gratification withholds one part and another

of the character and conduct from implicit obedience to Christ. For example, one Christian loves to speak freely and censoriously about others. Another is frivolous, another is indolent; and this defect, or this omission or refusal to let the law of Christ reach into that department of the heart and life has the effect upon the whole character which the imperfect action of a mechanical process or of the elements has upon an article. The galvanic current has not covered the whole surface with the silver or gold; the dye-stuff has not penetrated thoroughly into the cloth, the fire has not reached the whole mass,—as the Most High says was the case with Ephraim. Selfishness or the love of self-indulgence, is the cause of this. Now there is no one thing that works such destruction to selfishness in a man's character as the giving of money to his God and Saviour; if a man will do that, if he loves God better than his property, if a sense of obligation and gratitude to his Redeemer opens his heart and his purse, divine love has penetrated every where; the amount of heat necessary to melt down that crust of selfishness which encloses his money is powerful enough to melt it down to every part of his character and conduct.

This explains the frequent mention in the Bible, and especially in the New Testament, of the subject of giving. Notice how much the Saviour, in his discourses, said about giving. "Give and it

shall be given unto you, good measure, shaken together, pressed down and running over shall men give into your bosoms." "Lend, hoping for nothing again, that ye may be the children of the Highest." His parables and other instructions inculcate this indirectly. The good Samaritan, the unjust judge, the creditor and two debtors; Zacchæus, the rich fool, Christ's own feelings towards the hungry multitudes, and many other instances, all show that love expressed by giving, seemed to him the fulfilling of the law. He was himself the "Unspeakable Gift." It is no wonder, therefore, that he should so much enforce giving. This, then, is the explanation of the obvious proposition with which we set out, that the right use of property is a means of piety:—That the degree of love to God which will control a man's love and use of money is adequate to the entire control of his feelings and conduct.

Such being the case, it is clear that the more a man exercises love to God in this way, the more he increases in a permanent and settled principle of entire consecration to Him, and as every passion grows by what it feeds upon, this love to God thus exercised rises to a higher plane, till the man becomes a whole burnt-sacrifice to his God and Saviour. The man that has given his money to his Redeemer, gives Him every thing else; his children; his time; his influence; he is willing to go to the ends of the earth under the influence of

the same love which impelled him to give his substance to honor Christ. He prays much; men love him, some of them without knowing why. He is not an envious, jealous, murmuring, sour, repulsive man; you never knew a man who loved to give money to his God and Saviour, who was not kind and generous, magnanimous, charitable in his feelings, noble; in short, as to his spirit, a model man. He is a wonder and a praise to his fellow creatures. It is perfectly plain, therefore, why Paul wished to make his converts liberal Godward, in the use of their money, from right motives and in good objects; and we can see why such a man, in asking for contributions to charitable objects, should say to his Christian brethren and friends, "I seek not yours but you."

In the fifteenth chapter of Luke, we are instructed how Christ feels towards those nations which are perishing, by his own illustrations drawn from the lost piece of money, and from the lost sheep, and from the prodigal son. If such be his feelings, and the feelings of Heaven, toward one sinner, compared with the multitudes of the righteous; and if the conversion of one soul wakes up more joy in Heaven than the thought of the ninety and nine who are already converted, it follows that lost India, perishing Africa, and China so long a prodigal, must interest Christ and Heaven, in some respects, far more than Christianized England and America. We will not neglect

our duty to our own continent; and while we propose to give no less to Home Missions, we desire to comprehend the whole family of man in our love and zeal, so much the more as we see Christ preparing the way for the Gospel to be preached among all nations.

It is earnestly to be desired, and partly for the effect of it upon our own spiritual interests, that every member of the congregation be, intelligently, a contributor to the great work of sending the Gospel to all nations. For, it will promote your piety, in these ways:

I. *It gives you an interest in the conversion of the world.* You will think of Christ, and His work, in the vast extent of his benevolent purpose. You will look at the world, as you will when you are in Heaven. There, you will love China and India as you now love America and more abundantly; for you will catch the spirit of the Heavenly world, and view things on the same scale with Christ and angels. Then the angel with the everlasting Gospel flying through the midst of Heaven, you will follow with the deepest interest, and that in proportion as you have aided to prepare the way for his flight.

If you buy one share in a railroad, or manufacturing company, or in a bank, you never see that institution named but with peculiar feelings, and perhaps read the sales of stocks, to see how your small investment is likely to yield. Where the

treasure is, your hearts will be also. Give for the conversion of the world, intelligently, and to a degree which will cost you something, and you will feel an interest in the conversion of the world. Your interest will not be in proportion to the sum given; but in proportion to the interest with which you give it; and if you are faithful to Christ in your contribution, if you give it, as though you brought it first to him, or put it into his hand for him to place in the treasury, you will be an intelligent friend of that work for which Christ came from Heaven, and for which he will reign till it is finished. It might be the dawn of Christian hope in many a soul, it would be the strengthening of the bonds of love in every case between you and Christ, if you would in prayer give your subscription first to Christ. The less you are able to give, the more will it interest him, and the more will it be likely to affect your own heart.

We need to contribute to this object for our spiritual good, secondly, *Because it will help to save from the baneful influence of covetousness.* "Take heed and beware of covetousness which is idolatry." "No covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." Unless we form habits of giving while we are acquiring, it is as though we should build steam engines without safety valves, for the sake of economy; which would be poor economy.

The escape of some of the steam, alone makes it safe to use the rest. We must give or we shall perish. It is our only safety. To acquire and not to give, is death to a man's spiritual nature, as breathing in, and not breathing out would be to his body.

Again, thirdly, you contribute to this cause. *to save you from luxury.* With the increase of wealth, we shall invent ways to spend it, which will destroy us if we do not give much of it away.

Once more. Fourthly, *we need your contributions for their effect on your piety, by the principles and manner of life which they will create.*

Why did you go into the East India trade? Or after you were converted to God, why did you continue in it? What object did you propose to yourself in continuing to be an East India merchant? You naturally say, To get a living, to make money; to provide for myself, and family, and I hope also, to make others happy, and to do good. Now what an answer that would be from the lips of a young man whom you should call to settle over you in the ministry, or go as a foreign or home missionary, if the ordinary council should ask him, Why do you devote your life to the Christian Ministry? Answer: "To get a living; to make money; to provide for myself and family, and I hope also, to make others happy, and to do good."—How has it come to pass, My brethren,

that we expect a minister or missionary to have this for his first and governing purpose: to save men,—and the whole body of the church are expected to do this only in an indirect and partial way? Is there any difference in the price which was paid for his soul and ours?—Did he when he joined the church of Christ, give himself to God more unreservedly than it was expected you would do? To him and to such like him alone does this word of Scripture apply? “Ye are not your own: for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and, in your spirit, which are his.” Is this glorifying God in our bodies and spirits which are his, to take out a little sum once a month and *spare* it to the cause of Christ, and to feel that these calls are very numerous, and to wish that they were fewer and not so exorbitant? If this be our spirit, we need to consider our ways, and to think whose we are, body, soul, and spirit; who gave us our power to get wealth; whose elements, whose resources, we are using to trade or work with. There are some passages of Scripture which we need to read again and again: “Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.” “And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again.” “Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” “I beseech you, therefore, breth-

ren, by the mercies of God that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself." "So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." To forsake all that you have is to forsake it as yours, and return it as Christ's: it is to write the word *agent* in your sign. When a man's stock passes out of his hands, and his creditors put him into the store to sell the goods, or to continue the business, he and the goods are no more his than we and our goods, and all that we have, are ours. "For ye are not your own;" but *agents* for God, stewards for Christ; and the only question which any of us has to settle when God calls for some of his money, is, "How much, consistently with other claims of a similar kind, will it be judicious to give? All is Thine. God has graciously permitted me to support myself and family out of *his* property; I must not say, "All the funds entrusted to me are for my pleasure, my luxuries; and if I can possibly spare something for God and his cause, I will do so." This is inverting the nature and design of *stewardship*, and making the servant the master, and God the dependant. Some English servants being reprov'd by their master as wasteful, extravagant and indulging themselves, replied, "We never have anything here below but we send some of it up stairs."

There will be times, my dear friends, when it will not seem to be a hard doctrine, that God and Christ should be our proprietors and we their faithful stewards. "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out." It is affecting to look at the things which a deceased person used familiarly in his life time ; to see his garments every one of them, from his head to his foot, forsaken, his watch stopped, his very staff forbidden him in that last long journey ; his seat, his purse, his memorandum book, however private, all forsaken ; the snow-storm driving through the curtains of the hearse which is bearing him to the cold earth, his dwelling. When you shall be giving away this and that treasure, you will feel, if you feel aright, that to have laid up treasure in Heaven, to have bought bills of exchange on that far country whither you are going, was after all the best occupation of life ; and that what you gave away you really kept, and what you kept you lost.

And when it is said, "Give an account of thy stewardship ; for thou mayest be no longer steward," how surprised some will be to hear themselves called to an account for their business affairs, when they had never looked upon themselves otherwise than as bound to get and keep all they could, with the exception of that which they found it absolutely necessary to give away.

And when you receive from Christ that solemn

word "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord," how you will think,—What is meant by being "faithful" as a steward? do I deserve this appellation?

When you see all Heaven deeply interested in the salvation of the soul, looking down to the earth you have left, as the most interesting spot in the universe, and when you see souls adjudged, one, every second arriving from earth for its last awards, how your thoughts will go back to your store, or shop, or counting room, and to your house, and to the church, and to your every day life, and you will say, What did I live for?—I knew all this—what was my governing object in business?—what has become of all I hoarded, all that I wasted, all that I did not need for a comfortable and useful mode of living? could you return and be a man of business, doubtless you would be one of the most energetic men in your line; concentrating all your powers to prosper in your calling, to the end that you might glorify God and enjoy him the better forever. How you would love every good object. What an interest American Home Missions would have for you, the education of ministers, the diffusion of the Bible and good books, seamen, and especially, the conversion of the world to Christ. And when the time came for you to determine how much to give,

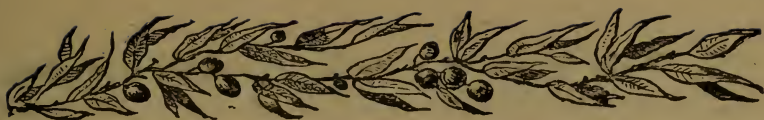
for example, to Foreign Missions, how much interest you would take in adding up your gains, to take the proper percentage for this cause, and if the percentage exceeded your expectations, how your heart would swell with joy, and you would say, If God would give me larger increase, so much greater would be my joy in paying his property in his name to his cause. All the while you would remember that you are going back soon to Heaven; that you have no continuing city here, nor abiding place; and you expect that one of your chief joys in Heaven will be to see those for whose salvation you have lived and labored and prayed.

Now the only difference in the two cases is, that you are *going* to Heaven, instead of *having been already there*; and seeing that ye look for such things, knowing, as you do, substantially, what views you would probably take in Heaven of life, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and Godliness?

Giving money to God and the Saviour is one of the most solemn duties which a Christian ever performs. It made Solomon illustrious; it rebuilt the temple, when the tithes came in; it immortalized a poor widow; it made the church at Corinth famous in all the world. Withholding money from God is an equally solemn and awful thing. It destroyed Achan; Saul's ruin began when he spared the chief spoil of Amalek; it sent Ananias

and Sapphira to a dreadful doom; and Demas went from the apostle's company to perish with the world that he loved more than God. Giving money to God tests all our Christian principles, lays the axe at every root of selfishness; shows how much and in what manner we love Christ; and brings out to his own view, and before Christ, a man's governing purpose.

And now in conclusion, I ask only one thing:—Let your subscriptions be subscriptions, as it were, to these words: “*Of Thine own have we given Thee.*” Imagine those words as heading the paper on which you write your subscriptions, and let your offering be the acknowledgment that you and all you have, are not your own. Thus our motives and feelings and conduct will all be right, if with entire consecration and love we may but say to him that made us and died for us, “*Of Thine own have we given Thee.*” If Christ would speak to us before we begin, we can imagine with what love he would utter, and what an infinitude of grace and truth there would be in the words, “I seek not yours but you.”



JANUARY.

FOURTH SABBATH MORNING.



MAN IN RUINS.

“—And the ruin of that house was great.” — LUKE 6: 49.

A HOUSE in ruins is a melancholy sight. The place which has been a home cannot meet with calamity and be destroyed, without stirring within us feelings of lively interest and sympathy; for we attach a degree of sacredness to a habitation which has been a home, and the exposure of its secret retreats and the destruction of such a sanctuary does violence to our feelings. Apart from the value of the structure, the ruined house is an interesting object which no one can pass, without stopping to mourn for it.

I will take you to see a house on which great ruin has descended. But I will first give an account of it.

I. This house was built by God's own hands. He made it out of the dust of the earth. After he had made the earth itself, and the sun, moon and stars, and the flowers, and fruits, the trees and every thing that grows out of the earth, and birds and beasts of every form and name, and thus would seem to have exhausted his resources, he built this house, and it was the noblest of all the works of his hands. He did not leave its construction to the hands of others, but we are expressly told that God made it with his own hands out of the dust. In the image of God created He him. One would have supposed that the Maker of all things in Heaven, earth and seas would have spent the whole of his skill upon such things as the works of nature, but he reserved his most perfect and wonderful work to the last; and that was the house of which we speak. Other things he made by a word; he spake and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast. Even light was created by a mere word. "Let there be light,—And there was light." But this house, we are informed, was made by the Divine builder of some material implying contrivance and effort and mechanism.

II. This house was wonderfully contrived.

No other structure in nature was ever like it in the number of its parts, their wonderful adaptedness to great purposes, or in the beauty of its plan

and finish. All who saw it testified that while it was the last, it was also the most astonishing of all the works of God. It was competent, more than any other structure, to be the abode of a superior creature with whom God himself designed to dwell in a sense in which he did not and could not have communion with any other of his earthly works. Of its inhabitant, indeed, he once said, "I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." It was no common thing which could be capable of such high honor, "builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

III. It was richly furnished.

Its exterior, though of commanding beauty and richness was surpassed by the interior where the power of God had exercised itself. There were things within, which no organization of matter in any other form contained, and indeed the image of God himself was said to be repeated in it, for the builder himself said, "In the image of God created he it," so that all who studied it, had a better idea of God himself than from all his works beside. How many pleasant things it contained, what curious designs, what beauty of execution, what wonderful variety, what durability of parts and of the whole, what capability of improvement without alteration of the main design, were bestowed upon it, time would fail to describe; but one said of it, and he expressed the truth, in most

appropriate words: "It is fearfully and wonderfully made."

IV. It was made with its inhabitant for immortality.

Decay was no part of the Creator's plan; possibly some transformation might have taken place in process of time, but only to enhance its original beauty, and make it more capacious for the wants of the inhabitant, who was incapable of death. He, like his maker, could say, "Of my years there is no end," and in fearful resemblance to Him also with regard to causing destruction, it was true that he inhabiteth eternity. Consider how great this house must have been which was contrived for the habitation of such a being; and that its builder and maker was God who made it for his own everlasting joy, and when he made it the morning stars sang together and he, himself, pronounced it, very good.

But we come now to contemplate this house under different circumstances.

V. Ruin has fallen upon it and upon its inhabitant.

It stands, but it is ruined. A house may be ruined and yet stand. But it is to fall, and its inhabitant is likely to perish with it.

Its form and features, its curious things will fall into the dust, irretrievably destroyed, an emblem and counterpart of the more fearful ruin which will come upon its inhabitant. The house which God ordained for His own blessed and blissful

presence, capable of more than tongue can express will come to naught and only suggest the idea of dissolution and misery. O sad spectacle! Who or what was the occasion of this ruin?

VI. Its inhabitant has rebelled against God.

Not satisfied with all which God had done for him, in a moment of temptation he lusted after a forbidden gratification concerning which God had said, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Then he forsook God and loved and served the creature more. The threatened penalty descended, and death took possession of him, and now by a slow process destruction is coming upon him. There was no reason for this rebellion. The character of God was unchanged. Blessings were innumerable, and all satisfying. Nothing was withheld which could be regarded as any better than that which was bestowed. Or if otherwise, it was infinitely better to have the favor and friendship of God; which, however, was thrown away in a most foolish manner, as one did who for a morsel of bread sold his birth-right. The consequences were fully foreseen, but in an evil hour the inhabitant forsook the fountain of living water and hewed out cisterns, broken cisterns that could hold no water.

But strange to say,

VII. God has used vast pains to repair and save this house.

His soul was penetrated with the deepest grief

when he saw that ruin had befallen a world. But here was a case of deliberate and unprovoked ingratitude. Every thing had been done for man. He had been granted dominion over every thing. God himself in immediate converse walking in the garden brought the creatures to him in their beauty and the luxuriance of their joy in such a world as he had given them. God was to superintend his education and train him up for glory. Of course there was exceeding grief. So it is said, "And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart."

But such was the compassion and love of God that he resolved if possible to repair this house and save its occupant. How shall I give them up? How shall I deliver them? My heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.

Then if it be possible for you to believe so strange a thing, the Son of God himself came down on a special mission, yes, for no other purpose but to repair this house and save its occupant. Such love and pity were never shown as he expressed. It is said that once as he was coming over the Mount of Olives, the thought of the ruin which had befallen came over him and he wept. He wept!

"The Son of God in tears
Angels astonished see."—

And the object of these tears might have said, but he did not, "Be thou astonished, O ye heavens at this and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate."

But more incredible than anything which has been said, The occupant of this house refused him admission. He stood at this house, and the house was made by him, but the house knew him not. He came to his own and his own received him not.

Oftentimes he was seen standing at the door and knocking and waiting to get in. And as they passed by, many heard his voice, a voice—how can it be described!—for never man spake like him, and they heard him say, "Behold I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Surely nothing could surpass this. And yet in times of darkness and when it seemed as though the house would be destroyed if too heavy a storm should beat upon it, that same voice was heard in accents of the most tender affection and entreaty:—Open to me, my beloved; for my locks are wet with the dews of the night. But all was in vain. He could not gain an entrance. And he died in pursuit of his object. Yes, his love and his efforts in this behalf cost him his life. But what will you say if I tell you that this inhabitant himself, the occupant of this mansion which God made and endowed, procured His death and was himself His murderer? Yes he crucified Him; he nailed Him to the tree;

and as He died, still He prayed, "Father, forgive;"—but O, this monster in wickedness never repented.

What did the Lord of this mansion do? You say, He sent His lightnings and they consumed this dwelling and its inhabitant; they made him a burnt sacrifice, with his house for an altar, and the wood of it consumed him. You are wrong; greater marvels of love and mercy are yet to be told.

. There came to that house afterward something like a dove; it was the Holy Spirit; and entered into that dwelling. The House which did not open its doors to receive the Son of God, could not prevent this dove from gaining admittance, and those who saw and heard what passed there tell us that nothing ever exceeded it; for sometimes they heard strivings there between this Holy Spirit and this inhabitant; Yes, they were striving; on the part of the Spirit there was earnestness, conjuring, adjuring, beseeching, entreating, warning, remonstrating, all in tones of love, and most subduing love. He told him of his sins against God, of God's goodness,—ingratitude,—of Christ's love, of the guilt contracted by His death, of the just condemnation and punishment due for such sins, and yet that God was even now willing to forgive and save; that the house should be fully repaired, and cleaned and beautified, and made a habitation of God through the Spirit;

may, that the Holy Trinity of Heaven would come there. He set before him the fearful ruin which would come upon him remaining in his present state.

All this was received with feelings — sometimes and for the most part with indifference, then with scorn, then with strong opposition and violent effort to do something to drive away this blessed visitant from the house. “O if he would but begone and leave me alone! Depart from me!”

At last He did depart. He made no sign; uttered no threat; but on a certain occasion this inhabitant did something which grieved Him; it grieved Him exceedingly, and He spread His wings, and returned to the bosom of the Father and of the Son.

All will confess that from the beginning, God had done everything. He made him, and would have redeemed and saved him. Yes, even when this transgressor had crucified the Lord of glory, even then mercy hovered over him; and would have gathered him as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and he would not.

Of course, you are prepared to hear that ruin at last befell this house and this inhabitant; and so it came to pass. There came a blast from the Almighty and it fell, and as it fell the inhabitant was whirled out of it by some invisible power and was conveyed away, every one thought, to some dreadful doom. They who caught a sight of his

face as he passed out, said that such woe and anguish was never before seen. He was driven away in his wickedness, and the house fulfilled the saying, Ashes to ashes, dust to dust.

Years passed by, and strange to relate on the spot where this house fell, there rose up a structure without hands. It had some resemblance to the former mansion; but it was more like a furnace of fire than any thing else; its appearance was hideous and terrific; flames issued from it, yet it was not consumed; darkness, fire and smoke, seemed at times in possession of it, yet it had all the form and appearance of the old house. And behold the former occupant approached; Alas! it was he, but one might have said to him as the seraph did to Satan whom he had known in Heaven, "If thou beest he, but O how changed!" He came; his face looked as though he had suffered, and suffered long; there were signs of growth in his expression as though his powers and faculties had advanced, he seemed superior in that respect to his former self; but everything about him bespoke the convict,—the prisoner,—the felon,—the captive,—the victim of despair. He was in the hands of fallen angels, devils; they went before him, they came behind him, they surrounded him; and he entered into his old dwelling. But shall I undertake to tell you what a shriek there issued from that dwelling, so that the fiends shrunk back ashamed? Shall I describe the

sensation of this unhappy creature as he was reminded of the original glory and beauty of that mansion, his former pleasures, and advantages there; and the thought of his wickedness there, and more than all, of his treatment of the Son of God, and how he delivered Him to death, and did not relent; and especially, how the blessed Spirit strove with him;—what memories of conviction, entreaty, and of that hour of His departure, overwhelmed him; and where he had been these long centuries, and that his condition now is to be worse than ever? O how he curses himself, and his folly, and his God; and in the midst of it, that dwelling, if such it may be called, rises and is borne away, and its inhabitant as by a wind, and is seen no more.

Look back and recall what was said of the house in its first condition, and think of it now, and say if these words of Jesus respecting it are not verified?—"And the ruin of that house was great."

Consider what has been said, O inhabitant of the earthly house of this tabernacle, and make haste. A storm may at any hour rise and beat upon you. Open your door; admit the Maker, and the Redeemer, and the Purifier of your nature to come in this very day. Let them come in. When you lock your door to-night, ask yourself, Are they within? or is Christ without, and have I locked the door upon him again? O will you not

open your door now to the Lord your God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost?

When Titus, the Roman general, at last entered Jerusalem, astonished at its defences he said, "Unless God had helped us, man never had taken this city." But it is credibly related that signs and wonders appeared in Jerusalem before the city was taken. It was the expiring cry of the theocracy, the giving up the Ghost by all of those wonderful signs of God's presence. It is said that a voice was heard in the temple, saying, "Let us go hence."—You know what happened to Jerusalem in its siege and destruction,—the dispersion of its people to this day. "Let us go hence," said the God of Zion, the Redeemer of Israel, the Heavenly Dove. O if you refuse to receive and entertain them, soon they will say of *you*, "Let us go hence!" Stay, O stay, Heavenly Mercy; this day, after so long a time, he will repent! strive once more, O Heavenly Spirit; knock once more, long-suffering Saviour; knock with thy wounded hand; and on these feet which bore the nail for him on the cross, stand and wait this day. It may be he will hear, surrender his mansion to thee, and become indeed, a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens.



JANUARY.

FOURTH SABBATH AFTERNOON.



AN ALMIGHTY SAVIOUR FOR EVERY SINNER.

“Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.” — HEB. 7: 25.

MORE than eighteen hundred years ago a death took place in Judea on a hill called Calvary which, itself considered, and viewed as to its consequences, is the greatest event of which we have any knowledge. Three victims were dying on three crosses. Two of them were thieves, and in other respects malefactors, for crucifixion was inflicted only for great crimes. Between them a mysterious being bows his head, crying with a loud voice, and gives up the ghost. And the vail of the temple was rent from the top to the bottom, and the sun was darkened, and the earth quaked, and the rocks rent, and many bodies of them that slept arose.

The death of this mysterious being was foreseen and described by the prophet Isaiah eight hundred years before it took place, and was thus mentioned: "He hath poured out his soul unto death, and he was numbered with the transgressors, and he bare the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

The world has received one impression with regard to the object of this death; for they who regard it differently are very few compared with the vast majority of the human race who agree in receiving the testimony of the Bible in its literal representations of this event as an expiatory sacrifice, a propitiation for sin, a ransom. "He gave himself a ransom for many." "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world." "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

Two great truths are specially revealed to us and frequently reiterated in connection with the announcement of the way to be saved. One is, that none can be saved except in this way. "Neither is their salvation in any other."* The other is, All may be saved in this way. This latter is the truth which is brought to view in the text,—“Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him.”

There may be some doubt which of two meanings we are to give to the words “to the utter-

*Acts 4: 12.

most." Does it mean he is able to save *all* who come to God by him,—the uttermost of them; or does it mean that he will save them wholly, give them a complete salvation? Perhaps the ambiguity was intentional, for it is certain that both meanings are true. I shall take the words in both senses indiscriminately.

I shall endeavor in this discourse to illustrate this truth: There is an Almighty Saviour for every sinner.

There is one exception. The true saying is, that an exception proves the rule. He that utters blasphemous words against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, neither in this world, neither in the world to come. In order to commit this sin, words must be spoken against the Holy Ghost. Surely he is a person. Surely he is a Divine person. Surely he has the prerogative of God. But with this exception all manner of sins shall be forgiven to men and blasphemies wherewithsoever they shall blaspheme.

This truth is so familiar to us that we overlook its surprising greatness. Who is this that can save all men? He that can save a fellow being from temporal death does a great work. He that can relieve a family or a neighborhood from famine or distress of any kind does a deed of no ordinary importance. But of Christ it is said, "He is the Saviour of all men." "He died for all that they which live should not live unto themselves,

but unto him that died for them and rose again.” “And he is the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only but for the sins of the whole world.” —He saves them not from famine, or from the death of the body, but from everlasting misery. He redeems them to God out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation. He has already saved a multitude which no man can number, and there are multitudes yet, beyond all our computation who will be the fruit of his death.

Among these there are of course great sinners beyond the ordinary measure of human guilt. Saul of Tarsus is an illustration. There are no sinners to be saved hereafter whose guilt is greater than that which has already been forgiven. Recite every form of iniquity, aggravate the description by every possible circumstance of shame and woe, let the transgressors be parents destroying their children, or children destroying their parents, or brothers or sisters imbruing their hands in fratricide, or husbands and wives taking the lives of their companions; multiply the years in which these sins remained unsuspected, and unforgiven; or let the nature of the sin be of the lowest debasement and brutality; in short, picture any form or degree or continuance of guilt and shame, and there are those in that blood-bought, white-robed throng to whom it may be said “And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are justified, but ye are sanctified in the name of the Lord

Jesus. For the sake of illustration, we will say there is the betrayer and murderer of a fallen being whom he beguiled into a lurking place, and sprang upon him and sent him without a moment's warning to the bar of God. To make the case as bad as possible we will imagine the victim to have been one of the worst of men concerning whose salvation there could be no reasonable hope, and that such an one was consigned by the hands of an assassin to a hopeless eternity. Take this harshly imaginary picture; it is a case which in all its particulars is not in the nature of things an impossibility. Look now upon such a murderer, go into his cell, take the Bible with you, and read this Hebrews 7: 25. Would you feel that those words are a mockery, that they have no pertinency in such a case?

Some would say, perhaps all would feel, It would be unjust to forgive and save such a sinner, especially if he had been the means of ruining a human spirit in all its interests for eternity. If we put this case on the ground of retributive justice we must say it would be unjust;—but let us remember that God can be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. How then could such a murderer be saved?

Not, I answer, on the ground of repentance. It seems to me that this case is a complete refutation of the doctrine that a man can be saved for his repentance alone. Reparation he cannot make.

That life which he betrayed he cannot recall. Suppose him to be sorry and to repent, is there any merit in being sorry and in repenting? Can this atone for sin, to forgive a sin? Suppose him to spend every remaining hour of his life in bitter wailing, refusing to be comforted and longing for the day to come when he shall offer up his life, as an atonement for his sin. Is that a compensation for his iniquity? Can murderers destroy your fathers and husbands and brothers, and then wash away their sins by tears, burning tears, nay, tears of blood, if they could shed them? But the murderer will give his life as an atonement. *His* life, his miserable life!—is that an equivalent for the life of a happy, innocent man whose life was invaluable to a family-circle? Will the murderer pawn his wretched existence for such a jewel? Can it for one moment be weighed for the price of that life, which he took away and cannot restore? O no! there is in the nature of human justice and even in the humane feelings of men no atonement for such a sinner. Leave him to men and he must perish, and forever expiate his guilt by sufferings. Suppose his victim, as I have already said, to make the case as aggravated as possible, to have been the most abandoned character and now a lost spirit. They must meet in the world of despair; they must be implacable enemies; the victim will hate his murderer, with intense malignity and be sustained in it by the approbation of all around

him, and never probably feel that his vengeance is sated or that he can ever exact from him all which his iniquity deserves. Whenever such a victim should feel a new tide of suffering rolling over him, he would think, It was you, O mine enemy, who sent me here without a space for repentance. As often as he thinks of Heaven, he says, It was you, O my murderer, that cut me off from all hope and possibility of reaching Heaven. Now this would all be just; retributive justice, that these two spirits should be everlasting foes and as you sometimes see two angry clouds discharging their forked lightnings into each other, that these two spirits should astonish the world of woe by their clamorous anger and infuriated hatred. Look, I say, on such a murderer doomed to just retribution, which is nothing but the fair recompense for his crime; look upon him, O ye who put aside the cross of Christ as the foundation of human hope and salvation, and tell us how, on your theory, that man can be saved. Perhaps you will say, He cannot be saved; unless by punishment for a term of ages and thus washing out his crime. You will say to me, If you will suppose that he sent his victim to Heaven, the case will be somewhat changed, but you have imagined a feature in it to make it infinitely worse than it may be, namely, that the victim should have been an impious man cut off in his sins. Do you pretend that the murderer under such circumstances can

be forgiven with no condign punishment hereafter?

We do believe that even such a man can be saved; and saved not by passing through the torments of hell fire, but that he can be saved freely, forgiven at once, and though he had been the occasion of endless misery to some abandoned creature, we believe that justice can be satisfied, if such a man be saved. We take the text as a declaration which covers even this case. "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost who come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

That sinner can come to God, and feel that he deserves to be punished forever and ever, and may consent to that just condemnation and utter not a word of complaint should God take him out of this world by an ignominious death to an ignominious punishment forever. But he may also say, Cannot God be just and yet justify me? Has he not set forth Christ as a propitiation for sins? Did not the Word who was with God and was God take my nature and die for this sin of mine? Did he die for me or did he not? Was I left out when he gave himself a ransom for all?—And when it was written, "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son, cleanseth us from all sin," was a special exception made of my sin; and when it was said of the Saviour, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" was it interlined, or was there a mental reservation, Except the sin of that man, meaning me, a wretched murderer?

How is this? Is Christ able to save them to the uttermost who come unto God by him? Perhaps you will say, In order to be saved such an one must truly repent, and it is not probable or possible that one hardened by such iniquity can or will repent. True, if repentance depended on him. If God forgives him and proposes to save him, repentance and faith are the gift of God. He could not be saved for repenting, for he can not repent without special grace. Can God consistently under such circumstances as we have supposed be gracious to such a man? We answer this by asking, Is there more than one sin which is unpardonable? But it will be said, Could you with any hope offer salvation to such a man in the name of Jesus? Offer salvation to him? "It is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom" you think that man is "chief." I would tell such a man that there was once a greater sinner than he, who is now among the greatest of saints. I mean David, the King of Israel. I would rather be this man with that blood upon my soul than to have been David with that blood upon my soul, omitting the previous history of the two men. I say, I would sooner take this man's chance of forgiveness than I would have taken David's, leaving out of view their previous character and conduct. I will charge myself and you to beware how we limit the power of Christ's

atoning blood, or the infinite grace of God in bestowing repentance and faith in Jesus. Perhaps some will say this is a dangerous doctrine to hold up, namely, That men may commit the foulest deeds, and yet be forgiven and saved.—We stand by the Bible. We derive the doctrine from its express words “He is able also to save them to the uttermost” &c.* He that abuses this doctrine, does it at his peril. But is there any danger? Will any man be stimulated to commit murder because he knows that Christ died for him; will he hate his brother and take his life because Christ loved him and gave Himself for him? The influence of this doctrine is all the other way.

“We know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him;”—yet there is pardon for hatred and malice and blood—guiltiness. Shall we consign the guiltiest and the most miserable of men to hopeless woe because it may do harm to proclaim the love of Jesus to them? Shall his cell be the forlorn passage, the waiting-room, to the regions of despair because we are afraid that some one in the street will overhear us preaching Jesus and the remission of sins, and go and imbrue his hands in his brother’s blood? We would stand at this prisoner’s cell and say, Salvation! O Salvation! True, you have sinned against society, and your blood must go for the blood of your victim. True, you

* See Isaiah 1: 18. “Though your sins be as scarlet,” &c.
1 John 1: 3. “The blood of Jesus . . . cleanseth from all sin.”

have sinned against every one of us, endangering our safety, lacerating our feelings, destroying the peace of your family and—but we will not say more; let your guilt be all that it is, yet you, even you may repent and avail yourself of atoning blood, the atoning blood of him who is your Maker incarnate and whose atoning sacrifice is sufficient for all the world's transgressions, then why not for yours?

Yes, there is intercession in Heaven even now for the murderer. Pardon on earth might be the destruction of law and human safety; but the atonement of Christ does more to sustain law and the safety of the universe than the punishment of a sinner can do. Let Jesus, the Redeemer be seen bearing the sins of that man in his own body on the tree and proclaiming, I came down from Heaven, I became flesh, I suffered, bled, and died to save that murderer,—and now I offer my sufferings and death in the place of eternal death, and all holy beings would say, This is more than an equivalent. God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. The sufferings and death of Christ are of more efficacy than the endless pain of a murderer could be to sustain law and order; therefore it is said, “Who is he that condemneth; it is Christ that died.” “He that believeth on the Son, shall not come into condemnation but is passed from death unto life.”

Let us make a practical application of this subject.

1. *There is no reason why we should any of us despair of being forgiven.*

Suppose that all the world should this day repent of their sins, and apply to Christ for pardon through the merits of his death. Would there be efficacy in the Saviour sufficient for their pardon? "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world." Now if He is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world, surely each individual sinner may be forgiven. O these glad tidings of great joy! For unto you, O sinner, is born a Saviour which is Christ the Lord. Yes, you have a Saviour, mighty to save. He will subdue your sins and cast all your iniquities into the depths of the sea, provided you repent of your sins and instead of going on still in your iniquity, you break off your sins by righteousness and your iniquities by turning unto God. For I observe,

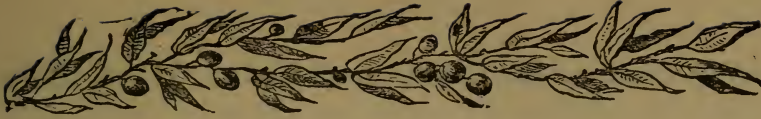
2. *It is only those who come to God who have the benefit of Christ's atonement and intercession.*

To come to God is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Then shall we return from our evil ways and humble ourselves for our sins. Christ came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. We need not expect to be forgiven and saved without effort on our part. No! The object of Christ's death is to bring us to God in repentance. Now if we repent and turn to God behold what provision is made for our forgiveness and salva-

tion. The Saviour is Immanuel,—God with us. The Godhead has appointed and accepts this atonement. “Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost,” &c.

We have been told of a man on trial for his life who confidently expected to be acquitted. His counsel assured him, his friends whispered hope, and the man himself when the news reached his cell that the jury had agreed on a verdict, ordered a carriage to be at the door of the Court House and take him to his family. He went in and stood up to hear the verdict, and the verdict was, “Guilty of murder.” I have often thought of it as a picture of a sinner’s confusion and shame, be he professor or non-professor, who goes to the bar of God without being beforehand justified by Christ.

But the greatest sinner that has accepted pardon through a divine, atoning Saviour, even he may go to the judgment seat of Christ with these words on his lips, “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died.” And after his whole life has been read to him from the opened books, God the Judge of all will say, “It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?” Which of these shall we be? One or the other. Choose. Obey the Gospel. Live.



JANUARY.

FIFTH SABBATH MORNING.



THE SABBATH SCHOOL.

—“From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”—2 TIMOTHY 3: 15.

THESE words will soon bear to be addressed to every protestant man and woman born upon our soil. The Sabbath School has come to be an auxiliary to the Church to a degree far beyond its original design, which was merely to instruct destitute children. Now it is a means of conveying a knowledge of the Bible, in a familiar manner, to every child of whatever condition in life, who is willing to be taught, and besides it brings an affectionate, faithful, Christian friend into close union with the young mind and heart.

The object of Sabbath School instruction is, therefore :

1. To make the pupil familiarly acquainted with the Bible as a book.
2. To explain its meaning.
3. To derive practical instruction from it.

These may be briefly stated under these words :

Acquaintance with the Scriptures, *Interpretation* of the Scriptures, *Application* of the Scriptures.

It is the proper object of the school-teacher, therefore, —

First, to make the pupil acquainted with the Bible. It is the kind of acquaintance which it is indispensable for one to have with the streets of the town or city, or with the apartments of a dwelling ; or with the tools of his trade. It is eminently useful that the scholar be, in time, familiar with the plan and history of the Bible as a book ; the objects of its various parts ; as, for example, to know the especial object of such a book as Leviticus in distinction from Genesis or the Psalms. To take this for an illustration : A young person uninstructed, on opening the Bible and turning to Leviticus, is immediately repelled by its minute description of forms and ceremonies, and is apt to transfer his feelings toward that book to the whole Word of God as containing much that is both obscure and useless. But an intelligent teacher, though not expecting or attempting to make all the details of that book interesting or inviting to a young person,

will, in speaking of Christ and the atonement, show the greater part of the book of Leviticus as providing for those types of Christ by which the Church of God for two or three thousand years was instructed, with reference to the great propitiation for sin. There is a design in the book of Esther, namely, To be a perpetual lesson on the subject of the overruling providence of God. An inspired book would be incomplete without a collection of sententious sayings, maxims, adages, called Proverbs.

The relation of the book of Acts to the Gospels preceding, and the epistles following, gives a scholar the idea of unity in the New Testament which he does not otherwise receive; and thus being made acquainted with the Bible as a book, it becomes far more interesting. For we turn away with dislike from that which seems incoherent and disjointed; but logic is the staple of the human mind. Everybody reasons, after his manner, and it is of great importance to show the scholar that there is a reasonable and a beautiful plan running through the Word of God. It should, therefore, be an object kept in view by the teacher, to make the Bible, as a book, interesting to the scholars through an intelligent acquaintance with its great features as related to its whole great intention. This cannot be done in one or two lessons; but being borne in mind and frequently brought to view, will be found to have a great

effect in an intelligent and useful comprehension of the Scriptures.

In connection with this, a teacher should make the pupil familiar with the places in the Bible where the several books occur, and why they are where they are rather than elsewhere. The Book of Judges and the Books of Chronicles have a chronological relation to the Bible, to know which will make them to be understood and consulted. The difference between the major and the minor prophets will be explained; the major prophets unfolding more at length the purposes of God with reference to the race, and the other prophets having respect chiefly to temporary and local affairs. In process of time the pupil will see through the plan of the Bible; it will assume order and regularity, and mutual dependence in its parts; it will be like a musical instrument of which one knows the manner of use, the object of its several parts, and how to draw from it a desired effect. But,

2. The work of interpreting the Scriptures to the class is the main work of the teacher.

What is the mind of the inspired writer in this portion of the Scriptures, is the proper inquiry. On this, all that he is to say depends for its effect, for it is always well for preachers and teachers to remember that nothing but the truth can have any saving effect. Everything else is comparatively useless, and may be positively hurtful. But "the Word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper

than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit." We see illustration of this in the effect which a pertinent quotation of Scripture always has in reproof, in enforcing duty and obligation, and in comforting. The original design of the passage, the object aimed at by the writer or speaker, the fair construction which is to be put upon the words, it is of the first importance for the teacher to ascertain and impart. In doing so, let him have confidence in the power of these truths, stated simply and clearly; for however simple they may be and destitute of human wisdom and attractiveness, we are told that "the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men." To convey the truth in the very words of inspiration, seeking to impress them with their simple explanation upon the memory, is wise. Read the Bible to a child, and it will understand the language, and remember it far better, as a general thing, than our own expressions; and the truth conveyed by it being, as it always is, capable of very many applications, will have a more extensive influence upon the thoughts than anything which we can substitute for the very words which the Holy Ghost teaches. Hence they are wise who seek to secure a lodgment for Scriptural expressions in the minds of their pupils. This, and the interpretation of Scripture must take the lead of every other part of teaching, especially of those historical, and local, and

statistical matters upon which we may be tempted to spend our time. This is a temptation which is to be resisted. Christ says to the Pharisees, "Show me a penny; whose image and superscription hath it?" Now, the teacher who spends much time on the subject of Roman coins, is out of his place as a Sabbath School teacher. Our hearts are prone to catch at minor points of information, and dwell upon them to the neglect of weightier matters. So it is in hearing preaching. A father who listens with his family to a sermon, for example, on the character and end of Judas, and entertains the family at dinner with a dissertation founded on the thirty pieces of silver, in which he tells them of the value of different coins mentioned in the Bible, and concludes by instructing the family that the preacher rated the thirty pieces of silver far too low, and that they were about seventeen dollars of our money, instead of twelve, as the preacher may have asserted, has mistaken ideas of his duty as a Christian parent, or he is in a cold and unhappy condition as a spiritually minded man.

This is the way in which the devil cometh and catcheth away that which was sown. He also does this oftentimes by making us chiefly concerned about a mistake in grammar, or rhetoric, or in a quotation, or in a historical statement. So he can frustrate the effect of a passage of God's word by leading a teacher, for example, to enter far into the mineralogical differences of the topaz, emerald,

and jacinth in the walls of the New Jerusalem, instead of dwelling mainly on the employments of Heaven and upon the truth that there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth . . . ; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

One who studies the Sabbath school lesson by the help of good marginal references, has probably the best preparation as a teacher. He who does this will find it more profitable to consult the marginal references to the twenty-second Psalm, crying "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" quoted so many times in the account of the crucifixion, and to make his listeners familiar with them, than to delay much in putting questions to each on the reduction of time from one table to another, instead of simply stating what o'clock now is the ninth hour of the crucifixion; What the twelfth?

In giving undue prominence to this, he loses golden moments and golden thoughts. And yet probably there is no temptation which more easily besets us as teachers, and we need to have our minds so absorbed with more important things, that these minor incidents and explanations will not be exalted out of their place.

In seeking for the meaning of a passage of Scripture, the end is not reached if we merely find the grammatical sense, — the meaning which the words and phrases would convey to any cursory reader, but there is an intention in the passage beyond this

which one who is familiar with the Word of God will be skillful to discover. For example, the elders of Israel in Egypt, after their burdens had been increased by Pharaoh, met Moses and Aaron in the way as they came out from before Pharaoh, and these elders reproached Aaron and Moses with being the means of their accumulated troubles. He who reflects on this will not fail to see that God purposes to teach us here how wrong it is to murmur at and accuse those who are endeavoring to serve us to the best of their ability; and how much need good men have of patience with those who cannot appreciate the difficulties of their situation, or safely be informed of all which their superiors would be able, if they might, to tell them; and how much better it is, as the sequel shows, to address ourselves to God instead of accusing one another; and how often God is at work for us, and is on the eve of accomplishing our deliverance when we are murmuring and ready to despair.

Again: Jehosaphat makes a league with Ahab and goes to battle with him and is defeated. Is this merely a story like that of the house of York or Lancaster? No! It is God's way of teaching us not to contract alliances in a good cause with persons of bad character; not to assume responsibility beyond our just obligations to our own interests and that of others, and at the same time, the kind consideration of God towards good men when they

fall into mistakes, and how different is the situation of a good man and a bad man overtaken with the same calamity.

To deduce such instructions from the Word of God is to fulfil the design of Scripture. For as Lord Bacon tells us, Scripture has a germinant meaning. Its primary, grammatical, and historical interpretation is but a small part of its design. God makes a book, one book, to instruct and guide us; he does not mention by name each condition and circumstance in which we may be placed, but he causes certain things to be written which the Holy Spirit intends shall be fruitful in instruction, to men of all times. Wonderful Book! The Holy Spirit fills each little historical incident with meaning, and the passages of the Bible are like Joseph's treasure cities in Egypt, stored with corn. "Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water: but a man of understanding will draw it out." So with the Scriptures.

He who learns to draw instruction from them, and is not satisfied with knowing and telling precisely what the passages mean, but to make each passage apply to the ever varying circumstances of our condition, is an interpreter indeed; one of a thousand. "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." He who gets instructive thoughts from passages of the Bible must dig for

them as for hid treasure. He cannot do it by coming to his lesson for the first time on Saturday evening; let him, early in the week, at least, read over the lesson, understand it, and keep it in his mind; he will be surprised to find that much that he happens to read during the week will have application to his lesson. Even the newspaper will afford him illustrations of it, and his conversations with people, his general reading of the Bible and his prayers; and especially his prayers, for there is no better way to arrive at the fulness and richness of Scripture than to make it the subject of the devotional hours. The teacher will thus come to his class as a cloud full of rain; he will himself be thoroughly furnished to every good work; he will be likely to save himself as well as them that hear him. He who gives us valuable practical thoughts about a passage of Scripture is a true interpreter.

Anything which illustrates and enforces the Bible is of more value than all human sayings or human wisdom. Let God speak; let us impress his words, his thoughts, and in striving to do so, we may fully expect the aid of the Holy Spirit, who will own us as co-workers, enriching us with good thoughts, lading us with spices, for the benefit of those for whom we pursued that heavenly trade.

But there is another work of the Sabbath School teacher which remains to be spoken of, and that is,

Thirdly, The application of Scripture to the hearts and consciences of his class.

Here is the secret of a teacher's power and success. He may entertain his class with narratives, and do them little good, though he seems to interest them at the time; and having explained the Scriptures correctly, and they will perhaps be a dead letter; he may be zealous for doctrinal truth, and teach the class how to distinguish between truth and error, and give them large quotations from Scripture to confirm their faith; — all this is well, but there is something of more importance, and indeed without which all else may be unproductive and transient. He who can skilfully deal with the conscience and make the explanation of Scripture the means of convincing us of our errors, our faults, our sins, the corruption of our hearts, our need of Christ, and of regeneration, and show us the subterfuges to which we resort, and set the Word of God against us as a reprover, and to stop our way in sinful courses; and who can lodge within us some precept, or threatening, or promise, will be sure to be a successful teacher.

To this end he must study the character and peculiarities of each of the class; see what their troubles and difficulties are; their liabilities to temptation, and apply the Word of God to them as one who watches for their souls. How superior this to making a Sabbath School lesson a mere lecture! If all were sincerely engaged in thus seeking

the spiritual good of each soul, results would follow which would make the Sabbath School next to the family, the nursery of the church.

When, therefore, one undertakes to teach a class in the Sabbath School, it is like assuming the pastoral office in a limited degree, and it is incumbent on that teacher to make the welfare of those souls his study. The good which one may do who from year to year instructs young persons in this faithful manner upon religious subjects, may be without limits. But some will say, You prescribe too much for us; we are incompetent to this work. We are willing to take a class, ask them questions and hear them say their lessons, but beyond this I have no talents or time. I need myself to be taught.

Now the great recommendation of the plan which I have developed, and which needs no urgency of mine to recommend it, has this great advantage, — that it requires less learning and talents and various accomplishments than any other method of instruction; and depends wholly on having our own hearts right with God. If you are a mere literary teacher, or a moral teacher, or one who chiefly seeks to entertain your class, you will often find it difficult to look up things to interest them; will feel that your most laborious efforts were not well received or relished, or remembered; but you cannot instruct a class with your heart affected with the pure and simple truths which the Bible suggests, and fail to reach the consciences

and gain the hearts of those who hear you. The Bible itself contains lessons to correct the mistakes into which many fall who complain that they have not sufficient talent and ability to be good teachers.

Consider the prayer of Daniel (ix: 4-19), offered near the close of the Babylonish captivity, the sixty ninth year of the seventy years of bondage. Daniel was about eighty. He was carried to Babylon at about ten years of age, and was one of the children who were fed on pulse. He was a learned man; he had had great religious experience; he was a man of prayer; three times a day he prayed in secret, and he was cast into a den of lions in consequence of it. Perhaps this prayer is given us as a master-piece of prayer; — the great attainment of a man who as a prince had power with God; for we read that the prayer led to the immediate commission of Gabriel who was sent in a vision with a message to him. Now what sort of a prayer is this master-piece of supplication, this effort of one who had prayed three hours a day till he was fourscore; of the man who had so loved prayer and had such confidence in it that he chose the den of lions rather than absent himself from his closet? Perhaps you will expect in such a prayer, great learning, eloquence, great power of language; great art of entreaty and of persuasion. No one can fail to wonder at the perfect simplicity, the deep humility, the absence of all parade, the forgetfulness of the charms of language, in this

prayer which is only the abasement of the soul before God, and the pouring forth of confessions and supplications.

God teach us that to be successful teachers of spiritual things, the great qualification is to be spiritually minded, which is life and peace! He who has a God and Saviour whom he serves with his heart, and seeks to know and love him more and more, has with the ordinary gifts of intelligence and speech, all the necessary qualifications for a teacher; while a person of the most splendid talents without this is nothing. Religious experience is the best help in the interpretation of Scripture. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are independent of outward circumstances; and wonderfully can he endow us with a power of persuasion irrespective of great natural talents. From a heart where he dwells he can make thoughts proceed which will refresh the weary soul and guide the erring soul. In a notice of Dr. Isaac Watts it is stated that a chimney sweep was heard singing at his work in a chimney, —and the words which he sung as he climbed up and scraped the soot, were these: —

“ The sorrows of the mind .
Be banished from the place.”

Would you not rather have written those lines for the chimney sweep than even Wordsworth's great ode at Queen Victoria's coronation? When we are willing and desirous to be the channel of communi-

cation from the Holy Spirit instead of our own wisdom and learning, he can make us utter thoughts which will impart instruction and comfort never to be forgotten. For he can fill us with far more of peace and love in a chimney than many Christians and ministers have in their trials and occupations, if they go to their broken cisterns for consolations. If there is one form of prayer more suitable to the Sabbath School than another, it is prayer directed expressly and importunately to the Holy Spirit. He is the author of the Bible. Let him be invoked in the place specially set apart for its study.

Parents, remember the kind friends who give their time and strength to the spiritual good of your children. Pray for them, that God will make their instructions salutary. Manifest your appreciation of their efforts by co-operating with them, and letting the teachers see that they are assisted by your interest in the children's lessons.

Let each teacher become the friend of each scholar, remembering the vast good which may result from instructions imparted under circumstances so favorable to religious impressions. It is well to remember that in spiritual things we can benefit people only as we love them.

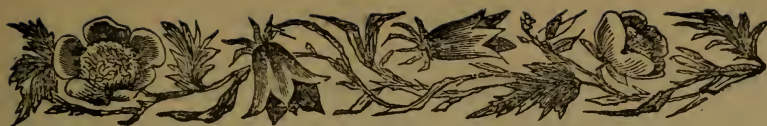
To sit as a scholar with the Bible in your hands, with a kind friend expressly employed to explain and enforce its meaning, will seem to these beloved young friends hereafter, a privilege which they

could not too highly prize. God's hand and heart of love are seen in these privileges, drawing you to himself, seeking your preparation for usefulness and happiness in life, and your endless welfare. Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go; keep her, for she is thy life. When thou goest it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee. Thy steps shall not be straitened; and when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble.

If there be a sight that compares well in interest with that of a class of children and their teachers in a Sabbath School, it is a class of young people or adults who have not outgrown their love of religious instruction, but who assemble to study the Word of God. If all of the congregation whose duties permit would associate themselves for this purpose in classes, they would receive and impart great spiritual blessings.

I would therefore commend the interests of the Sabbath School to your affections and prayers. God has magnified his Word above all his name. They who honor the Word of God, shall find that God will enrich them with wisdom and understanding. A love for the Word of God and an increasing knowledge of it, will save you from error, which is the parent of all sin, for there is no sin without some precedent error. Spiritualism is a judgment on those who neglect the Bible. If we forsake God's appointed mode of communication

with us, he will let us delude ourselves with witchcraft in its modern forms, and with other impostures which tend to bewilder and dazzle and to blind. We have a written, plain directory to duty and to all essential knowledge of God and of his will. Let us continually stir ourselves up to greater love and zeal for this infinite gift of God, his holy Word, and especially may his blessing be upon those who give themselves to the work of explaining it to others. May they themselves thereby purchase to themselves a good degree and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.



JANUARY.

FIFTH SABBATH AFTERNOON.



THE SABBATH SCHOOL TEACHER'S MANUAL.

“Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.”
—PSALM 138: 2.

WHETHER these words refer to the fulfilment of divine promises to David, or, generally, to the communications of God to men, the declaration contained in them is equally true. The caption of this Psalm says, “David praiseth God for the truth of his word.” That something more than his private word to David is referred to appears probable from the fourth verse, “All the kings of the earth shall praise thee, O Lord, when they hear the words of thy mouth.”

God has always put peculiar honor upon his word whether it be his promise to a man or nation, or his utterances by the mouth of prophets. If the unseen God would command the confidence

and love of men, and establish his authority over them, his communications to them, however made, must be such as in a peculiar manner to honor him. He must magnify his word above all his name. However much his name as Creator and Ruler may be magnified by his works, men will look to his words, his communications, for more direct knowledge concerning him. His communications to men must, therefore, be such as to command the highest confidence and praise. In showing that God has in this sense magnified his word above all his name, I shall illustrate the following proposition:

The Bible as a book is a pre-eminent illustration of divine wisdom.

In choosing this subject for a sermon to Sabbath School teachers, I am influenced by the consideration that great efforts are now made to undermine the confidence of people in the Bible. As one way to destroy a tree is to make deep gashes here and there in the trunk, without cutting it down, the unbelievers of the present time seek to inflict wounds upon the Bible, expecting in this way to destroy the superstitious reverence, as they call it, which men have for the Scriptures. We hear many things said against the Bible in popular forms of expression, derived, however, from transcendental sources, whose effect is to trouble the minds of many who have no suitable advantages for refuting them. The Bible being the only source of instruction in the house of God and Sab-

bath School, the whole business of the Sabbath School teacher being to illustrate and enforce that Book, everything depends upon the value which he places on the Bible, and upon his confidence in it, and his reverence for it, in making him zealous in his employment. It has therefore seemed proper to remind the Sabbath School teacher of the grounds on which he is warranted to cherish supreme confidence in the Bible, and reverence it as the Word of God.

I observe, therefore,

1. We might expect beforehand that a benevolent Deity would make some permanent revelation of his will to the human race.

It is for the interest and happiness of man to know something about his Creator in addition to the truth of his existence and natural attributes as proved by the works of nature, and in confirmation also of that impression respecting his moral character which is written on the natural heart. To secure his favor, to avoid his displeasure, man needs to know specially what God requires of him. There are also great questions which the mind of man naturally desires should be answered respecting his destiny, and in explanation of the mysteries in and around him. If, therefore, there be a benevolent Deity, which we assume, it is clear from the light of reason that he will make a permanent revelation to the world concerning himself, the duty which he requires of man, and man's destiny.

When I say a permanent revelation, I mean one which shall be recognized from age to age as the universal standard of truth and duty, completed at a proper time, sufficient for all the purposes of a revelation from God.

If tradition is to be relied upon with regard to anything, this is certain, that from the beginning, and while the race were comparatively few, God chose to reveal himself by personal appearances. He spake in time past to the fathers by the prophets. But it is evident that the time must have arrived in the progress of things, when it was desirable that the world should have an authentic record of those things which had been preserved by tradition, and to which should be added a full and sufficient disclosure of the Divine will concerning him. But,

II. To the eye of reason there were great difficulties in the way of a Divine revelation to be made in a Book which should be suited to the whole human race.

To the benevolent Deity comprehending all the interests of men, and all which concerns his own glory, the nature and manner of this communication or revelation to men must have appeared inexpressibly important. When the race were comparatively few, he chose to reveal himself by personal appearances, as was just remarked. But the time came when it seemed necessary, we will suppose, that the world should have a book which should

be, in a sense which no other book could be, the Book of God, distinguished from them all by the name of The Book.

If it were the purpose of God to bestow such a book on the world, it is easy to see that infinite wisdom alone could make such an one as would be perfectly suited to the wants of the whole human race. For by our supposition it is not to be for one nation, language or age, but permanently for all nations, for every language, for every age. It must be adapted to every condition of men. Considering the importance of early impressions upon the minds of the young, it must be in a peculiar manner constructed so as to interest the rising generation of every people. Yet it must not be a mere book for children; to be worthy of God it must contain mysteries. It must interest man in all the variety of his intellectual progress and development. It must contain truths and language suited to all, and so copiously that it will require no index or thorough knowledge of its different parts to find here and there a word of comfort, for example, for the sick and dying, the mourner, the prisoner; but its general tenor must be such that on reading it anywhere God will so appear in it, more conspicuously of course in some places than in others, that it shall be a safe and useful book in every possible condition.

But this is not one half of the difficulty attending the preparation of such a book. Different na-

tions have different modes of thought, and their varying temperaments make different styles and different kinds of writing specially adapted to them. The dwellers beneath the tropics and around the poles differ in some respects in their modes of thought, and the Bible must therefore adapt itself to that which men have in common in all the latitudes of the globe.

But it must not be a cumbersome volume. The majority of the human race are not addicted to study, or to much reading. The size of the Bible is to be considered, and who but God can judge how large and how small it might best be? It would seem that it could not, in the nature of things, be a small book. Its subjects are, God, the duty of man, his destiny. On these subjects books could be multiplied without end, and not exhaust the themes. What shall be the limits of the volume which is to contain all that we are to know of God in this world? At what point shall revelation be suspended, when the human mind, excited by that which is already revealed, is craving more? We see at once that infinite wisdom alone can decide how much to say on each topic so as to say enough, and yet not swell the book to inordinate dimensions.

But if this book is to be the only revelation of God to man till the end of time, and through all time is to be the daily directory of every human being, the true light that lighteth every man that

cometh into the world, how can it be constructed so as to retain its originality and not be so familiar as an old tale as to lose its interest ; how shall it be constructed that it will not become an antiquated book ? It would be unsafe for the reputation of any uninspired book to be the constant companion of all men for a few years ; they would grow weary of it ; they would long for a change ; even Homer would seem to fall asleep, and Milton's adventurous wing would tire us, if we should keep imagination on the stretch for days and nights to follow him. Yet a book as we have supposed is to be made which will never grow old, any more than the fountains or the sunrise.

But the minds of men in different ages of the world are interested in far different things ; the progress of science and of the arts will make vast changes in human society ; the intellectual and moral tastes of men will be improved ; is it possible that a book can be made which shall not be above the comprehension or beyond the taste of a rude age, and yet satisfy the cultivated minds, for example, of the twentieth century ? To make the book useful, it must draw its illustrations from common life, and from the arts ; and from customs and from natural phenomena. But it would seem impossible to do this, and yet make a book of the kind contemplated which will be tolerated more than one century, because it would contain, as we should suppose, allusions to things which at the

time when it was written were believed to be true, but which succeeding ages and advancement in knowledge would correct. It would seem that, instead of having our Bible for all times, it would be necessary to have one for every century. and as the world advances with accelerated velocity in its discoveries, one for every generation.

Think, too, of the criticism to which every human production is liable. Is it proposed to make a book for the human race? Who can make one which shall stand the test of daily and hourly examination, and not only be as acceptable as at first, but contain hidden wonders, unsearchable riches, to satisfy and gratify the human mind till the last day, and find in so many bosoms such a defence for itself against cavils and hostility as to retain its authority and influence as the Book of God?

What work of God yet known to us surpasses this projected volume? If God shall make such a book as we have now considered, it may well be said of it, Thou hast magnified thy Word above all thy name. The creation of a planetary system by one act of omnipotence, stupendous as such an act confessedly is, does not strike the mind as so difficult as to adapt one and the same book to the conditions and wants, to the understanding, feelings, and taste of the human race in all parts of the earth, and in different ages of the world.

We have agreed that it is in the highest measure desirable for the human race to possess such a vol-

ume, if it should be consistent with the wisdom of God to bestow it upon them. A book which will commend itself to every succeeding age, and to far distant times as one that has stood the test of time, formed the religious character of past generations, ameliorated the condition of man by its moral and political influence, and like a sun in the heavens shed its benignant influences without distinction upon men ; a book which came from God, and contains all which man can know concerning Him in this world, so that each human being may have access to this only source of knowledge equally with his fellow men ; a book requiring no learning to understand all in it which is essential to peace with God, and one which is never to be superseded by any other book, but will be in the hands of men at the moment when they hear the voice of the archangel and the trump of God. If we had never seen such a book, and there had been a disclosure from Heaven that such a volume was to be given to the world, we cannot describe the earnestness with which it would be looked for. Instead of having been composed in successive parts at long intervals, should it be announced that it had been handed down from Heaven to some favored city, the rest of the world would turn their eyes to that place. Magi would travel from the rising to the setting sun to find it. The coming of Christ did not excite an interest in the minds of men greater than would be excited by the appear-

ance of that book. Translated into every known language of the earth, it would soon spread wherever man is found ; the people which sit in darkness would see a great light : and to them which sit in the region and shadow of death, light would spring up. Heaven and earth would be in communication.

There must be such a book. The usefulness of it, the absolute necessity for it, the infinite wisdom in the bestowment of it, make it next to certain that there is such a book. If there be a benevolent God, there must be such a book. Such a book there is. It is all which has been described, and the half has not been told you. Consider it well, and you will cry with adoring gratitude to the Infinite Giver, "Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name."

We have considered the difficulties in the way of the production of such a book ; difficulties insuperable except by omniscience and infinite skill. We are now to see how these difficulties have been met. God, who made every thing and saw that it was good, has employed his infinite wisdom in the construction of a book for the human race. Is the book worthy of its divine Author ? Is it a pre-eminent illustration of Divine wisdom ?

III. I am to show that the Bible, as a book, is a pre-eminent illustration of divine wisdom. In doing this I observe,

1. The size of the Bible illustrates the wisdom of God in the construction of the book. While it can be expanded by the arts of printing to a great size, it is also put into a form which a child can hold in his hand, and which can be carried about the person without incumbrance. In that little volume is contained all which can be known of God in this world, and enough to secure for him who reads, immortal happiness. There is no duty which he owes to his fellow creatures, there is no office which he may hold among men, there is no trial which may befall him, there is no condition of life, high or low, rich or poor, in which he may be placed, there is no quality or grace of character of which he is capable, but that Book contains full instruction and help with regard to it. One of the greatest of men said to his young friend, "From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation." All this is contained in that little book which you can hold in one hand, while in the other you hold a book of questions to aid you in reading it.

Go into a law office and see the array of books on jurisprudence ; and then consider that the laws of God, and all which is essential to human salvation, are comprised in one small portable, convenient volume, and adore the wisdom that framed the Bible.

2. The style of the Bible is an illustration of divine wisdom.

It is perfectly simple. It treats of the most sublime and difficult subjects, many of them beyond the comprehension of men or of angels, and yet in all that is said respecting them we need find no difficulty in understanding the thoughts of the writers. The style of the Bible is so peculiar that men immediately recognize a quotation from it in an address, not merely because they are familiar with it, but because there is something in the language and turn of thought which distinguish it from common speech. This is not peculiar to one translation. The remark is made of other versions besides the English, showing that there is a peculiarity in the thoughts themselves, and not merely in the language in which they are conveyed.

If a benevolent God bestows a book upon the human race, the same benevolence which led him to bestow it would of course lead him to give a book which would be adapted to the common mind; so that no more learning than being able to read would be required to understand enough of it for all practical purposes. This we see is the case. The little child reads and understands the stories in the Bible almost as early as it can read anything, and the book used in charity schools to teach adults to read is as frequently as any other the New Testament. Nothing is easier and more simple than the first chapters of John, and yet those chapters contain all which is essential to salvation. Such, then, is the style of the Bible. The God

that made that beautiful element, the water, for human use, gave the Bible with a style as clear as crystal, free from those stimulating and wearying qualities which characterize mere human productions, and that too in proportion to the interest which its subjects have for us.

While the style of the Bible is uniformly simple, there is a great variety of style in it. Not far from forty different minds were employed in composing it. No one of them indulges in abstruse, philosophical speculations, or in anything which all may not comprehend. But when Plato undertakes to instruct the world, — Plato, of whom an ancient said, “If Jupiter should speak Greek, he would speak in the style of Plato,” — he is so obscure that the world is divided as to his meaning in many things; and to have read Plato is considered an uncommon attainment. Yet Solomon, wiser than Plato, and the wisest of his race, writes in a style so perspicuous, easy, and beautiful, that it may be said of each of his books, that Plato in all his glory is not arrayed like one of these.

The variety in the style of the Bible is one of the most remarkable illustrations of divine wisdom in its composition. For while these holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, it is an interesting fact that each of them retains his peculiarities as a writer. The style of Moses is far different from that of Isaiah; David and Jeremiah and the evangelists are in many respects unlike as

any writers that ever lived. By means of this originality of style in each book, preserved notwithstanding the inspiration of the writer, the Bible insensibly has its power to interest the human mind as it could not if all the thoughts were run in the same mould.

3. The different kinds of writing in the Bible illustrate the wisdom of God in its construction.

Without doubt if men had been called upon to decide what kind of book the Bible ought to be, there would have been a great diversity of judgment. Many, no doubt, would have insisted that if the Bible is to be a rule of conduct, it should be written in the form of laws. What a calamity if the Bible had been a mere statute book, "Be it enacted" heading every chapter, and, Thou shalt not, introducing every prohibition.

Shall the book contain history? The answer would perhaps be, Where shall it begin? and still more, where shall it end? and within what banks shall the stream of history be confined? Shall it contain poetry? Some would say, What is the use of poetry in a book of laws, or in speaking of such awful themes as the Bible must reveal! In short, men would have found it as impossible to agree in making a Bible as in making the worlds.

The foolishness of God is wiser than men. In a few simple words he tells us of creation; and the wonder is that Moses, writing in an age when nothing was known of geology or astronomy,

should write nothing contradictory to future discoveries, but in such a manner that his words should be confirmed by them. Then, instead of a book filled with laws, we have ten commandments, comprehending the whole duty of man, and to illustrate them, we have the complete history of a peculiar people, in whose eventful experience, God, the human heart, everything relating to life, and human happiness and misery is unfolded in the most captivating manner, not in the form of precepts, but in narratives which surpass anything even in fiction for eloquence and beauty.

Man has something more than understanding and conscience, and requires something more than precepts. Accordingly his feelings, the deepest, tenderest feelings of his nature are reached and impressed in sacred songs, penitential, reverential, dirgelike, joyful, suited to every possible condition.

But a large portion of the race, especially in oriental regions, are fond of maxims and pithy sayings. It is said that the Turk is struck with the power and beauty of the Proverbs of Solomon. That book, the production of the wisest of men, contains in a condensed form, and chiefly in aphorisms, a greater amount of prudential wisdom than can elsewhere be found.

Under this head, perhaps better than another place, I would allude to the wisdom of God in employing four men to write the life of Christ. It was necessary that there should be more than one

witness to such a history. Four men were therefore employed, each to relate the story in his own manner. They differ in minor points, as honest men always do in giving a narrative; for none but imposters agree in every circumstance of a story. We sometimes hear it said that the evangelists do not perfectly agree. Suppose that they agreed perfectly, without any variation; their several narratives would have only the value of one narrative; and there would then be no use in having more than one man write the life of Christ. Here now we see the wisdom of God in permitting those four men to vary from each other enough to give a separate interest to each narrative, and at the same time preventing them from disagreeing so far as to hurt their credit. No writer of history would think that he could make his book acceptable, if he should publish four parallel narratives of the same events by four different men; having told the story once he would prefer to say that the others agree substantially in that account. But God can employ four men to recount the life of Christ, and promote the interest and authority of the New Testament by so doing.

The longest of the Psalms of David is a psalm in praise of the Holy Scriptures. When and where shall we end if we attempt their full praise? As David said, I know not the numbers thereof.

1. If such be the importance of the Word of

God, and if there be such wisdom in constructing it, we must believe in the plenary inspiration of the Bible.

By plenary inspiration, we mean that the Bible is fully inspired. This inspiration consists of direct suggestion when it is needed; guidance at other times, and full supervision at all times; the words themselves having the sanction, at least, of the Holy Ghost. It is absurd to suppose that such a Book is not verbally inspired. I repeat, it is absurd to suppose that such a book as we have described the Bible to be would have been left in the composition of it for the imperfection and errors of men to mar the whole as they would have done, had not every word been watched over by the Almighty. If, therefore, this Book had been written on the throne of God with his own hand, and had been sent to this house by angelic ministrations, we would have no more confidence in every word of it than we are warranted in feeling towards it now.

It may be said, since the books of the Apocrypha were, for some time, regarded as a part of the Holy Scriptures, how do we know that some other portions of the Bible may not hereafter prove to be spurious?

Eighteen hundred years, it will be allowed, come near at least to a reasonable time in which to have tested the inspiration of the present Canon. Had

the book of Tobit, or the books of Maccabees remained in the Canon of Scripture as long as the latest books of the Bible, it might be argued that more time should be allowed to prove the present Canon.

But in the first place, no apocryphal books are extant in the Hebrew tongue. This is one circumstantial evidence against their antiquity. All are written in Greek, except the fourth book of Esdras which was written in Latin. None of them were admitted into the Canon during the first four centuries of the Christian church. In the catalogue of inspired writings prepared by the Bishop of Sardis in the second century, they are not mentioned; nor in the catalogue of Origen in the third century; nor in those of Athanasius, Cyril of Jerusalem, and Jerome in the fourth; in view of which Bishop Burnet says, We have the concurring sense of the whole Church of God in this matter.

In the next place, these apocryphal books were never regarded with the same reverence as the books of our present Canon, till the Council of Trent, only about three hundred years ago holding its sessions between the years 1545 and 1563, canonized these apocryphal books, as the Romish Church also canonizes dead men's bones. The real object of the Council, convoked and opened by Pope Paul III, was to counteract and crush the reformation. It enacted several conclusions under the pain of anathema: —

1. All the books of Scripture, canonical and apocryphal, are possessed of Divine authority.

2. Tradition, whether it regards matters of faith or practice, must be received with the same veneration, forasmuch as it is the unwritten Word of God.

This was the first time that the apocryphal books were sanctioned as parts of Scripture; but with Protestants, the doings of the Council of Trent are not imperative. The nature of these books, and the light in which they were regarded at the first is indicated by the name they bear, Apocrypha, derived as some say, from a Greek word which means to hide; or as others say, from two Greek words signifying out of, or away from the chest, because they were not kept in the chest or crypt with the sacred books. Some use, however, was made of the apocryphal writings. The book of Judith, the Wisdom of Solomon and Ecclesiasticus, were at first allowed to catechumens, or candidates for the church, on account of the excellent moral precepts contained in them; and when they were read in public they were given to the readers who stood in a lower place than the officiating pastors and elders. The books of the Apocrypha seem never to have had the consent of the Church to their inspiration, in the age when they appeared, and when of course the evidences of their authority could best be examined.

But here we have a Canon of Scripture which has generally been received from the beginning,

and time "which doth all things else impair," only confirms its authority. "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the Word of our God shall stand forever."

It would be unsuitable to notice here the objections of professed infidels against the Word of God. The Bible will always have enemies, and so will Christ and God. The Bible, says a German scholar, is like a white hard beach, on which polluted and stormy waves have rolled for ages, and the beach is now whiter, firmer, and more beautiful than when it was made.

We ought to speak even of infidels with compassion; in sorrow not in anger, nor with contempt. But it is affecting to see what associations the Christian world generally has with the names of Voltaire and Paine. He who assails the Bible illustrates only his own imbecility and folly. When an artist draws a pyramid or a column, you observe that he draws a camel or a man below it, to show the height of the pyramid or column compared with them. Their well known stature by its diminutiveness in contrast with the great structure above them, shows us the dimensions of the noble pile. Thus the Bible reduces to insignificance every human intellect which approaches to measure itself with the wisdom of God.

If on a lee shore in a noble ship, holding on by her great chain cable and bow anchor from destruction and death, the passengers should see one

of their number at work with a small file to separate the cable, he would seem to them no more insane than certain men seem to us who spend their time and strength to destroy the hold which the Bible has upon the community, upon the world. "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." We may say to one who aims to remove the Bible from its place in the affections of the world, Thou destroyest the hope of man. We may ask in its behalf of those who would subvert it, as was said concerning Christ, Why, what evil hath it done?

The greatest service which Sabbath School teachers can do for their scholars, is to make them intelligently familiar with the language of Holy Writ.

I say, the language of Holy Writ. That teacher does most for the intellect, the taste, the intelligence of his scholar, who makes him understand and commit the words of Scripture. There is no such language as the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth. Our English translation is as good, to say the very least, as any one which might now be made would be for posterity. The meaning of words changes from age to age; if we have a new version for ourselves, it would in the progress of languages need revision. It is not too much to suppose that, seeing the vast influence which the present English Bible was to have upon that important portion of the human race speaking the English tongue, God afforded the translators his

special providential aid in making it so generally faithful to the meaning and spirit of the original. It is acknowledged by scholars of different countries that our English version of the Scriptures does not suffer in comparison with any other. Such compactness of expression, such purity of language, is nowhere else to be found among the records of the English tongue. In every point of view, then, it should be the great object of the Sabbath School teacher to store the minds of his scholars with the language of the Bible, encouraging them to commit portions of it which are remarkable for beauty and force, as well as those which convey the most essential truths. Far better is it to familiarize the minds of the pupils with the language of the Bible, though it be done simply by reading to them striking expressions or parts of Scripture stories, than to employ the time in the reading of other books, which is the practice of some faithful teachers who employ every possible art to interest their scholars. But to do this I would prefer to take the Bible, and by previous study select such passages, perhaps certain proverbs, or the sayings of Ecclesiastes, or devotional words in the Psalms, but above all those words of the Saviour, which have affected my own mind, and impress them upon the minds of the pupils. Images of truth and beauty will thus be found in future years to have been made on their minds, like the effects of solar painting. They will lay

the foundation of a correct taste ; make them intelligent and stable when they become members of the church ; do much in every way to improve their minds, in addition to their direct and indirect religious influence. But it is obvious that no teacher can do this effectually who is not himself a great lover of the Bible. Enthusiasm in every calling is essential to success. To impart a love for an ancient or modern tongue or for one of the sciences, or fine arts, a professor must be enthusiastic. He who would make his pupils love the Bible, and would identify its very language with their modes of thought, must have those feelings towards the Bible which led David to write the 119th Psalm. He must have such an estimate of the Bible as to make him cry, Thou hast magnified thy Word above all thy name.

In the name of all Christian parents, and of the ministers of our Lord Jesus Christ, I would pray you, respected and beloved teachers in our Sabbath-schools, to make it one great aim of your labors, and second only to the conversion of the soul, to store the minds of our children with the language of the Bible. Teach them to give their answers in the precise words of Scripture, not in paraphrases, neither in imperfect quotations. If you will make our children familiar with the language of Holy Writ, we and they will be reminded of their obligations to you until their tongues are silent in death, and the scenes and language of

Heaven supplant those of earth. Fill their minds with the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth and you will arm them against gainsayers, furnish their memories with words which in hours of trial will be sweeter than honey and the honey comb; you will qualify them to edify others in prayer, and help them as often as they draw near to the throne of grace. Let me urge this as growing out of my subject, that you love and study the language of Holy Writ and impart your love of it to others. One of the greatest, if not the greatest scholar in languages, Sir William Jones, has spoken in the most enthusiastic terms of his indebtedness to the Bible as a means of mental cultivation. The influence you may exert by thus infusing the Bible into the imagination of your pupils, to be reproduced constantly in their future intercourse with men, may not be such as to be weighed or be subject to any other measure, but it will be like rain on the mown grass, whose roots bared to the shower show in the vigor and freshness of the field at autumn, the penetrating influence of the rain. Come thus to your scholars with your hearts and tongues full of the Bible, each of you as a cloud full of rain.

A prominent object in our Sabbath-schools should be the formation of Bible classes for adults, and young persons not children.

I am never more affected by any sight than when I go into a Sabbath school and see each member of a class sitting with a Bible in his hand. I

say with myself, How little, after all, he realizes what he possesses when he owns a Bible, or how solemn a thing it is to sit with it open in his hands. God wrote it. The idea of it he formed in his infinite wisdom; he was more than four thousand years in preparing it for complete publication, because it was to be his only written revelation to man. Hear the testimony of an inspired man: It is able to make you wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. This book is the message of God to your soul. It was given you for your guide through life, to prepare you for death, and fit you for the open vision of God in Heaven. We long to see the adults of our congregations whose circumstances will permit, gathered into classes for the mutual reading and studying of the Bible in the Sabbath School. The great contest between truth and error is to be fought on the question, Is the Bible the word of God? Infidels,—and it is an interesting fact,—generally say that if they were believers in the Bible, they should be evangelical Christians. But while they generally admit that the Bible teaches the evangelical faith, they reject the Bible and partly for that reason. Think not, any of you, that if a flood of infidelity comes in upon us, you or your children will be uninjured by it. You will feel its demoralizing influence in all your secular pursuits, in your counting rooms, in your family circles. Gather together, and help each other to understand this blessed

Book, and take the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God.

Concerning one who has gone to Heaven, and who had made the Bible his constant guide and companion, we have thought, With what feelings must he look back upon it from the full light of Heaven? As he compares his full vision with that glass through which he saw darkly, yet nevertheless saw the outlines of that glory which is now revealed, he must think of that blessed book with the deepest interest and affection. But he no longer needs even the Bible. He left that lantern at the entrance of the valley of the shadow of death, and dwells in the place where the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

When it is daybreak on the sea, the sailor no longer turns his eye to the friendly lighthouse. It has served its purpose for the night, and is eclipsed by the dawn. "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts."



FEBRUARY.

FIRST SABBATH MORNING.



CHRIST AT MEAT WITH PUBLICANS AND SINNERS.

“And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples: for there were many, and they followed him.”

MARK 2: 15.

THE scene here presented is one of the most interesting in the life of Christ. A painter could have found as great a variety of striking faces in this group as perhaps ever was collected together. Why it was that the lowest orders of the people were stirred up at that particular time to follow Christ, we are not informed, but it would seem that it was specially ordered for some interesting purpose. As you sometimes call together companies of your special friends and acquaint-

ances, or make an entertainment for distinguished guests to gratify your own feelings and theirs, so the Saviour, perhaps, took occasion to enjoy himself by bringing around him at one and the same time a large collection of the lost and abandoned. It is likely that Jesus was never happier on earth than when he sat in the midst of such a group. No other teacher, no other man had ever had a crowd of such people around him before. It was a motley collection indeed. There were the publicans, the men who bought the privilege of collecting the taxes, coming under obligations to pay the government a certain sum, and then, with power to assess, using sometimes the most cruel arts of extortion and oppression. So that the name publican was hardly less obnoxious than the idea of a freebooter. It was seldom that a Jew dared to hold the office of a publican, to enrich himself by spoiling his own countrymen; foreigners generally occupied the office, and the Jews hated them beyond description. It must have been a deeply affecting sight when a large number of these men came around the Saviour. What characters must have been there. What faces ploughed with the lines of acquisitiveness, greediness, meanness, cruelty; and faces from which every mild and humane expression had long since fled. There they sat with Christ. The lamb has invited the wolves and hyenas to an entertainment; the dove has opened her house for the owls.

Should a man invite to his house the people who for one week are brought before the police court of a large city, he would gather a similar company to that which sat at meat with Jesus in this house.

What may we suppose were the feelings of Christ as he looked upon this group. No doubt he said with himself, Here, the great purpose for which I come from Heaven is illustrated. "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost." We may suppose that his benevolent heart never was happier than on that occasion.

What were the feelings of the company? In the first place, they no doubt wondered at one another. Were they met for plunder? Were they a gang of robbers or burglars, called together to concert some depredation? It no doubt seemed strange to them that they should compose one company, without the intermixture of more respectable people, excepting Christ's own immediate family.

Then again, without doubt they wondered at Christ. The rulers and learned men rejected him, but these had no object to gain in refusing Christ. His wonderful works had arrested their attention partly, no doubt, through that greater readiness to believe which there is in such minds, but more by the heartfelt impression which they had that he was a good man. Those things in him and about him which led the learned men and the great to despise and reject him, prepared for him in the hearts of these sinners, namely, the absence of all

pomp and circumstance, the appearance of humility and condescension in him. They, it seems, had accepted that invitation of his, and for the reason assigned by him, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." They no doubt had either heard or some one had reported to them how, when he had first opened his mouth to the multitudes at the beginning of his ministry, he began with these astonishing words, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Some of them, perhaps, were such, — the poor in spirit; — and could it be, they doubtless said, that we, the lowest and last of all flesh, have the first offers of Heaven? Yes, for Christ had also said, "And behold, there are last which shall be first."

What may we suppose was the nature of the Saviour's conversation with them? Without doubt he had a kind word and a kind look for every one of them. He needed not that any should testify what was in them, for he knew what was in them. The birth and childhood of every one of them was known to Christ. He knew the turning point in their lives where they left the path of uprightness and virtue, and became wicked, and how they went on in sin and what S^átan did to them. Could anything make that malicious enemy gnash his teeth more than to see a large detachment of his friends

going over to Christ; the Saviour sitting at meat with them and winning them to him by his love? Perhaps he called one and another of them by name, and by some words of encouragement and by some act of pardon made him weep aloud so that the whole company was subdued. Perhaps he gave them good advice with regard to the amendment of their lives; perhaps he told them that he would always be their friend, however much the world might turn against them. And, no doubt, as the great theme of his conversation, he made plain to them that greatest of all truths, God in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." Not imputing their trespasses unto them! Every one of them probably entered that room with the feeling that if they were forgiven it would be by some large sacrifice, by some severity inflicted on their bodies or minds; but what must have been the joy of that company when this great truth first broke upon their minds?—That they might receive at once a full and free pardon for all their sins. Oh, it seemed to them, no doubt, that after some years of repentance and expiation it might be possible for them to be forgiven; but there at the Saviour's side they found that it was far otherwise; and lo! the heavens were opened unto them, and God in Christ, appeared to them a pardoning God. It is a feeling which has no parallel or similitude which fills the bosom of a great sinner when he finds him-

self forgiven and reconciled to God for nothing on his part, without money and without price. Sometimes he is lost in amazement, bewildered with joy, to think that the thing which of all seemed most difficult, indeed impossible, or which it would take years and great sacrifices to do, should all be done at once and as a free gift. The sinner feels that he has injured God beyond all description; he has disobeyed him, and opposed him, and hated him; and now for God to come over such mountains of his transgressions and say, "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions and as a cloud thy sins," seems to him incomprehensible.

Then, again, the sinner often wonders how his soul can be cleansed, that is, how he can ever cease to love sin and be purified from things which are natural to him and alway cherished, though with a conviction of their shame. All at once he finds another law in him making him love holiness and hate sin, and consent to the law that it is holy and the commandment holy and just and good. Now he is able to hold communion with a holy God; now he knows for the first time what prayer is, and answers to prayer. Then, that wonderful truth is verified to him, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

It would have been interesting could we have heard the confessions and seen the repentance

which were witnessed there. Without question, many a rich publican there stood and said like Zaccheus, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him four-fold." What an inquiry meeting that was. O what breaking hearts and streaming eyes, and reconciliations and songs of joy.

But let us derive some instruction from this scene for ourselves.

I observe, then,

I. There is a wonderful adaptedness in the character and feelings of Christ to the hearts of men.

Light is made for the human eye, and the human eye is made for the light. It is just so with respect to Christ and our natures. When he is suffered to exert an influence upon us, it is unlike any other effect. He conciliates us; he makes us feel that we are loved by him; that we are dear to God; that he is disinterested in his love to us; that all his conduct is marked by free grace to the undeserving, and that his joy is as great in forgiving and saving sinners freely as a large prize would make a mercenary man. It is astonishing and affecting to notice the power of the Saviour's name over the feelings of men. No sermons ever meet with such a response as those which have Christ for their theme. When you begin to talk with inquirers, if you speak of the Saviour you get access to their hearts at once. This power of Christ over

the human heart is such that his very name sometimes operates as a charm. We can frequently arrest the attention of a sick person in a partial stupor or wandering state of mind by repeating distinctly the name of Jesus. There was something wonderful about the Saviour's person when he was on earth, in his power over devils. For it is said, "And unclean spirits when they saw him, fell down before him and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God." His presence and love reach where no other presence and no other love can find admittance. There is an affecting illustration of this in an anecdote which is told of the good Bishop Beveridge, of old time. He lay upon his dying bed, almost unconscious of what was passing around him, and with a sort of film over the eye of his mind, which made even his remaining perceptions very obscure. His chaplain took him by the hand and said, "My dear Bishop, do you know me?" He turned his dim eye upon him. "Do you know your chaplain?" He gave him no sign of recognition. His wife came to his side and took his hand, "Do you know me?" He looked at her with a vacant look, and glanced away as though the effort to recognize her had been fruitless. The chaplain perceiving that earthly friends were fading from his memory, took him by the hand again and said, "My dear Bishop, there is one whom you certainly know. You know the Lord Jesus Christ." He made a great effort and said in

broken accents, "The Lord Jesus! I have known him forty years. He is my best friend." Some here say this. May all be able.

"And may the music of thy name
Refresh my soul in death."

2. The power of Christ's name and character upon the hearts of men leaves us no excuse for neglecting to seek and save any.

It seems that the disciples were present in this company. We can not but think that Christ had a purpose with reference to them in calling these souls around him. When he would teach his disciples brotherly condescension and kindness, he takes water and washes their very feet. When he wishes to instruct and qualify them as ministers of the gospel, he gathers a promiscuous company of publicans and sinners around him and shows his disciples not by precept, but by example, how he intends they shall feel toward their fellow men. He seems to say by this scene, Wherever you find a fellow-creature, there you find one for whom I died; and the more hardened and far from Christ, the more abject and neglected, the more let him excite your compassion. We may wonder what the feelings of the disciples were at such a scene. Their prejudices and their habits of caste which led them to speak of Gentiles as dogs, and forbid them as Peter said, to eat with men of another nation, no doubt received some violent shocks on

that occasion. But they learned more of the heart of divinity, and were better instructed how to preach by spending the hour at that table in that company than they could have been, without it, by sitting for years at the feet of Gamaliel. We are furnished there with the best of all means to win souls. Did it depend on human science, on educating people, on our talent at conversation or persuasion, we might despair ; but we have a Saviour's love for our theme, and that is all we need. We may say to every fellow sinner, "When we were enemies Christ died for us." We may bend over the dying and bid them hope in the last hour of life on him who saved a thief on the cross. We may follow the murderer to his cell and tell him, "Even your guilt can be forgiven. It is not necessary for you, even *you* to perish. Though you sent a fellow creature to the bar of God, yet even that sin can be forgiven, and while the laws of God and man require your blood, yet for your guilty soul the blood of Jesus has been shed, which speaketh better things than the blood which crieth against you from the ground." Surely, then, if we know and love the Saviour, we shall have no excuse if we do not use means to make men know and love him. The Saviour will love to see us surrounded with them that are lost sheep, and we may expect that he will be in those prayer meetings and conference meetings where such souls are by you gathered together.

3. We are made to think by the scene in the text what interesting companies of redeemed sinners will be in Heaven.

We know but little of the wondrous works of God's mercy among our fellow men. But judging of that mercy according to the power which worketh in us, we may form an idea of its unlimited condescension. Such guilt as we never could suppose would be forgiven, God forgives freely; and sins which we would suppose it would require eternity to repent of and cancel, God blots out not one by one, but as a cloud. When you reflect who you were, what a blind, hardened sinner, how ignorant and depraved, and how you sported with death, and how God spared you when you were on the brink of destruction, and what loving kindness and mercy he bestowed on you, it gives you some idea of the mercy of God to the rebellious and guilty. We shall adore that mercy in our salvation when we find ourselves in Heaven, and we shall see multitudes who were redeemed under circumstances which call for louder praises even than we can utter. Now the kingdom of nature is full of beauty on land and in the sea. Is the kingdom of grace less beautiful and rich? No, it is the chief of all the works of God, and therefore in Heaven we shall see works of mercy in the souls of men which will surpass all his wonders in creation.

“God in the person of his Son
Has all his mightiest works outdone.”

As Christ is the head of the universe in everything else, or as the Scripture says, The beginning of the creation of God, the first-born of every creature,— so he is in this respect,— that he is and will be the happiest. The happiness of the Saviour in Heaven with all the redeemed before him, and he remembering as he looks on each of us our personal history, and what acts of kindness he did for us, will exceed the power of all but God to conceive of and contain. What praises from every soul, from families; think of your family circle, standing together and praising Christ. Then that universal song of the redeemed, as they bow before him.

“ Oh may I bear some humble part,
In that immortal song.
Wonder and joy shall tune my heart,
And love command my tongue.”

You have seen a field of grain, when the head of each stock loaded to the full, was bowing down, and a gentle wind was moving each of them with a motion which looked like that of worship. There, as far as the eye could reach, stood the tall spires of ripe grain bowing under the common impulse of a light wind. It makes one think of the myriads of the redeemed in Heaven, bowing before the Redeemer. O happy, happy company; and happy, thrice happy Saviour!

“ When shall the day, dear Lord, appear
That I shall mount and dwell above;
And stand and bow among them there,
And view thy face and sing thy love ? ”

I remark in the last place, The greatness of our guilt is a special warrant to seek forgiveness. Jesus Christ loves to save great sinners. “ He pardons like a God.” Look at the scene in the text. Let it incline your heart also to follow the Saviour. Go and sit at his feet, and tell him your griefs and sorrows and your sins ; he will hear you, he will forgive you, and while the scornful moralist and the self sufficient Pharisee reject him, he will be found in you the hope of glory.

But if Christ should hold a session here with his disciples, it is doubtful whether he would find enough who are sinners in their own esteem to make up a company. Should he propose to remain here after service and have personal conversation with those who feel that they are in perishing need of him as a Saviour, who would remain ? Some would like to converse with Christ on interesting questions, as, for example, whether we shall know each other in Heaven ; or whether he is to have a personal reign on earth ; or whether there are few that be saved ; or how long Adam lived before he fell. As for Christ as a Saviour from sin and hell, they that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But they are not sick. They will

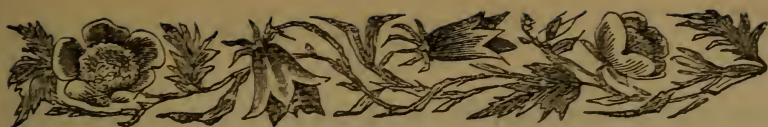
sleep as securely to-night as though they were not lying on the brink of eternal death. A sudden ill turn may be ready to plunge them down to helpless and hopeless sorrow. But Christ died in their stead. They say, This was very kind if it were so, but why should he have taken so much pains? They are going to Heaven on the development theory, moral culture, treating everybody well, and living a respectable life. They have no more question but that they shall be saved than that God is good. They expect to find themselves at the marriage feast with all who prefer to go there by erroneously, as they think, believing in the sufferings and death of Christ.

But when the king came in to see the guests at the marriage supper of his son, he saw there a man who had not on a wedding garment, and he said, "Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment?" The kind host in those countries provided and distributed suitable apparel for those unable to provide themselves. His wardrobe stood open. Why, then, was not this guest properly arrayed? He was speechless. The reason was, he thought that it mattered nothing in what costume he appeared; his own was good enough. He was bound hand and foot and cast into some dark and dreadful place where he wept and gnashed his teeth. Now God has provided a righteousness for us which he insists we must have instead of our own. Is your own good enough in your es-

teem? Do you expect to meet God with your present character, and be accepted thereupon? If you are, our Bible is all a fiction, and the parable of the wedding garment is a delusion. It is an interesting truth that none have more deep and pungent convictions of sin when their eyes are opened than moral people. For those things which lead them to love and cultivate morality make their sins appear peculiarly dreadful when God substitutes his law instead of their standard as the rule of his judgment.

“But what if I do not feel myself to be a sinner needing Christ?” This is the most affecting of all cases. I fear it will be with you as with two young men in California who in a great fire went into a chamber of their ware-room to get their books and papers, and closed the iron door after them to keep out the smoke and draft. But when they came to the door with their precious treasure, the heat had swollen the iron door; it would not open; their voices were heard, but the fire prevented help. They died with all the evidences of their property in their hands. You see they made a mistake, but it was fatal. My hearers, if the Lamb of God was slain for the sin of the world, and the Old Testament with its sacrifices has illustrated the cross, and Jesus and his apostles have preached to you salvation only through his righteousness, and you conclude to follow your own way of thinking, you will come to Christ’s door

with all the evidences of your self righteousness in your hand, and perish there. Such a Saviour as Christ is implies that there must be enormous guilt in sin, and since he died for all, he died for you, and therefore your sin is great. Believe it in season. Seek refuge in this Friend and Saviour of sinners that iniquity may not be your ruin.



FEBRUARY.

FIRST SABBATH AFTERNOON.



THE NATURE OF SAVING FAITH.

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”—HEB. 11: 1.

NO other exercise in Christian experience, not even hope, nor love which “is the greatest of these” and is the fulfilling of the law, is, in the whole Word of God treated with such fulness and richness of illustration as faith. In the characters and deeds of the ancient worthies mentioned in the Eleventh of Hebrews, faith is selected as their great excellence, though we know that they were also pre-eminent in other things.

There are four kinds of faith. 1. Of things to come. 2. Of things past. 3. Of testimony. 4. Saving faith. The inspired Word sums up the

whole in a description which can not be improved. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

To use an English phrase, faith *stands us instead* of the things we hope for and believe in. By it the elders who were sent to spy out the promised land made up a good report of it, because they believed God, and had assurance of victory. Their faith was substantially a conquest of Canaan and was demonstrative evidence of the things which they believed they would see but had not seen.

The power of past events over us depends entirely on faith.

We feel unwavering confidence that in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth, and we are as sure as though we had been present during those days of creation. God says to Job, "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare if thou hast understanding. Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy."* But though we did not see the worlds created, still when we pray we adore him who made heaven and earth and seas. Thus faith is to us instead of sight. It is the evidence of things not seen. Hence the apostle says, "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things

* Job 38: 4-7.

which are seen were not made of things which do appear." The truth that everything which we behold was made out of nothing is established in our minds merely by our yielding assent to the Divine declaration, notwithstanding it contradicts all our experience.

Things past can have no power over us except as we have faith. Strike out from our minds all which we thus derive from faith, and what would happen? The whole of the Old Testament history would perish altogether; the fall, the flood, the exodus of Israel out of Egypt, the cloud, the pillar of fire, the manna, the smitten rock, the prophecies, would be a heap of ruins; and thus with regard to the history of God's providence, we should be as though there were no past. Could we look into the minds of unbelievers, we should be struck with their vacuity. With them the Old Testament is of no authority. Adam and Noah and Abraham have no practical influence in their thoughts, any more than the moons of Jupiter; thus a whole department of thought and feeling is absent from their minds. They do not know as much with regard to the past as a believing child with whom faith is the evidence of things not seen. They say, "Show us evidence." But the apostle says, Faith in the Word of God is evidence; the evidence of things not seen. Here is brought to view an important truth. Believing the testimony of God is the best evidence to the mind that a thing was or is. A

thing is known more surely by faith. What are some of the sources of knowledge? It is replied, testimony, experience, sight. But the clear declaration of God received and confided in, is the surest knowledge. Hence it is not true that faith is enthusiasm. Modern philosophers reject faith. They want evidence. But believing is the best ground of knowledge.

But the future is an illustration which we can feel more sensibly. Things to come are employed by the Author of the human mind to move us to duty. Thus it was with Noah, who by faith being warned of God, moved with fear, prepared an ark, in sight of an unbelieving world. The expectation of things to come is one of the most powerful motives constantly employed in the Bible to warn and cheer us. Were it not for the threatenings of the Bible, if men did not believe that there is a retribution after death, other truths would have but small power to move them. Most men would forego future and spiritual happiness could they but live here in the enjoyment of earthly things. But the reason why some are persuaded to repent and prepare for death and judgment, is, they know there is a judgment, when God will bring every work to view with every secret thing, and that He will render to every man according to his works. The persuasion which we have of this is faith, the evidence of things not seen. God intends that we should be moved by it.

The full orb'd illustration of the influence and importance of faith is in the feelings and conduct of certain good men. It is seen in Abraham, who is the great example of it, in his implicit confidence in the word of God. He heard a voice saying to him "Get thee out of thy father's house into a land which I will show thee." "By faith he went out, not knowing whither he went." That confidence in the word of God was afterwards more severely tried in offering up that son, that only son, whom God had appointed to be the father of many nations.

So with regard to all the ancient saints described in this chapter. They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims, and looked for a city even an heavenly, and desired a better country. They endured every form of trial in pursuit of their heavenly inheritance. They would not accept deliverance offered them at the expense of their principles and hopes. Such was the power of faith in ancient days; and if we know anything of religion by experience, we know something of the excellence of this precious faith. It was not confined to the Old Testament days, nor to the apostolic history, nor to the times of martyrs. For in the next place,

We seek the power of faith in great afflictions, at times when the dispensations of God are peculiarly suited to test our confidence in him. There are afflictions which seem to mock at all our laborious efforts and anxious solicitude, dashing down the fond superstructure which we have reared with

so much care and affection. While reason almost totters on her seat, there is a feeling of peace with God which passeth all understanding, an assurance that all is right and good; that it would not be otherwise, consistently with the Divine will; and the hearts which bleed and are broken by that will, say, "Thy will be done." In contrast to this we sometimes see a spirit of murmuring, and sullen grief; without any feeling of love to God; whereas when the heart is right with God, the greater the trial, the greater is a certain feeling of peace and assurance arising from the conviction that God is fulfilling some special purpose, so that in great and sore bereavements when the affliction is as great as possible, there is positive happiness; not a bare submission, but a feeling of positive happiness in the consciousness that God has come nigh to us. It seems at times a privilege to be deeply afflicted in a mysterious way, to show our Heavenly Father that we can love him and trust in him when he gives no account to us of any of his matters. We do not wish him to explain; we are willing to be still and know that he is God. There seems to be no exaggeration, no false enthusiasm in the exclamation of the apostle James, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations." Nor is the apostle counted strange when he says, "And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also." It seems a privilege to have God near to us; to feel that he is doing something with you,

and we bless the hand that lifts the rod. We suffer in the affliction, from all its inconvenience and privation and the loss we have sustained; but still this confidence in God keeps our hearts fixed on him, so that we cannot be moved and we feel that God is a better portion than all the objects which are so dear and justly dear to our hearts. Some are happy when sick or in pain. This is faith in God. It is the most important thing in such a dark and trying world as this; it makes God present to our minds, so that we seem to see him at work and have as much confidence while we do not understand him as though we heard his voice explaining each step of his proceedings, or showing us the final result of them. This is the evidence of things not seen.

See it, again, with regard to the general expectation of a Christian relative to the future.

It is the course of this world to seek for happiness wholly in this life, and therefore to esteem the riches, pleasures, friendships, honors of this world as the supreme good. But a spiritual mind has an eye to future blessedness in Heaven. The comforts and joys of this life are not despised, but received with a grateful heart; yet something says to the heart of the believer in the midst of all his happiness here, this is not my home, my rest; I am begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not

away, reserved in Heaven for me. Have you ever mourned at a loss, and loved God; and God restored it, and you still clung to God? It was a happy experience. It is a sublime thing in the midst of temptations and perils such as ever press our path here to see a man looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God; walking through the world on a pilgrimage receiving from it enough to make him comfortable on his way, but refusing to make this his rest. There are probably to the inhabitants of the Heavenly world few sights more interesting than that of a man pressing through difficulties and trials, overcoming the most seductive temptations, glorying even in tribulations, and reaching forth to a Heavenly inheritance. When they see how much there is within us and without us to fix our affections here, or to make us doubt and even despair, and what power of principle it requires to keep unseen things before the mind as the objects most to be sought after and hence many there are who never seek for them, or having begun grow weary and faint in their minds; —he who year by year treads that upward path brighter and brighter till the perfect day, is one of the most deeply interesting spectacles probably known to the inhabitants of the Heavenly world. And such are we if this with us be the victory which overcometh the world even our faith, and if we by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honor and immortality.

The importance and influence of faith have their most striking illustration in connection with the way to be saved. Viewed in the light of the cross of Christ, faith is the greatest thing in the whole compass of human knowledge or experience.

Sin can be forgiven, the greatest amount of sin, and all manner of sins and blasphemies with the exception of one sin which is like striking with his own sceptre of mercy at the God of mercy. Sin as scarlet, and red like crimson, can be forgiven; God will not impute our trespasses to us, on a certain condition. Angels who sinned in Heaven are punished with everlasting destruction. The just desert of sin God has informed us, is endless punishment together with fallen angels. This can be remitted and, most important of all, the sinner made holy, be adopted as an heir of God and joint heir with Christ and have a holy nature and an endless Heaven for his inheritance.

How, we ask, is this effected? What weight of silver and gold is the ransom? What rubies; how many measures of the topaz of Ethiopia; what mines of sapphires, make this redemption? Who can count the flocks and herds, or fell the wood for a burnt offering, or press the olive trees of all the earth for the oil of this sacrifice? How many leagues is the pilgrimage over which the sinner shall wander to make penance; or what austerities of living, and what flagellations, or how many hundreds of thousands of prayers make up

this great atonement? Perhaps life is not long enough in which to finish it. How many ages shall the sinner suffer after death; through what enormous woe shall he pass to reach his pardon; who are the tormentors, and what the long drama of misery, which must be enacted before justice shall return her sword to its scabbard and say to the miserable soul, It is enough?

Can it be believed, — the sins and the miseries which sin engenders, all our guilt and its endless punishment, are taken away and our nature is changed by one simple, instantaneous act of the mind which is the consummation of a certain state of heart; and its consequences are thus expressed: "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." * Again. "He that believeth on him that sent me hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life."† Sometimes faith is as the flower of a plant, of gradual growth; sometimes it is sudden as with the Jailer at Philippi.

There is nothing more surprising or affecting than this, that in a suitable condition of mind, believing in the atonement made for sin, accepting Christ with the heart, relying on him with a sense of need, committing the soul to him, looking for pardon through his sufferings and death, or by what-

* Romans 4: 5.

† John 5: 24.

ever expression faith may be represented, this simple act of believing on Christ is accompanied by the renewal of man's nature through the power of the Holy Ghost. It saves the soul. Now this act of faith is accompanied at once by the renewal of our nature by the Holy Ghost, adoption into the family of God, the pardon of sin, progressive sanctification and final salvation.

It is not every truly converted person by any means, who remembers the moment when he accepted Christ by that one act of faith and passed from death to life. Some of the very best of Christians cannot tell the time when they were converted. Richard Baxter says that he was once in a meeting of forty ministers who were relating their religious experience, and it so happened that not one of them could tell the time when he was converted; and Mr. Baxter adds that for his part he did not know the moment of his own conversion. There have been those who could relate a splendid experience, the time and all the circumstances, and each successive feeling as it was gradually developed, was stated with great accuracy, and such a one has in more than one instance given sad reason to his best friends to believe that the root of the matter was not in him. Still there are perhaps as many cases in which the convert knows the time of his reconciliation to God. There are those who sing with John Newton :

“Sweet was the time when first I felt,
The Saviour’s pardoning blood,
Applied to cleanse my soul from guilt,
And bring me near to God.”

Saul of Tarsus could probably sing that song, and Zaccheus the Publican, and the woman that was a sinner, who brought her box of precious ointment to Christ; and so could the Jailer at Philippi. They had no long tedious process of doubt and fear; but fully aware of these, were translated from Satan’s darkness into God’s marvellous light. Conversion is instantaneous in every case, of course; but the evidence of it is not always apparent at once; and I would encourage those who are yet unconverted, to pray God that they may have a clear and striking conversion. It is a great comfort through all your Christian life to remember that great and wonderful event of converting mercy; you will never prefer any other event or experience to it; it will make you confident that God has begun a good work in you. O what a work is that of being born again!

Here is one distressed on account of sin. He has tried prayer, and reading the Bible, and reformation and every way of atonement, and has endeavored to obtain peace with God with the plea of his own misery. All at once the idea of justification by faith occurs to him in his perplexity, as it did to Luther while he was wading up the Scala Sancta, the Holy Stairway in Rome,

on his knees to atone for his sins, when something, he says, seemed to thunder in his ears, "The just shall live by his faith." Then the great truth of acceptance with God without works occurs to the mind by the Holy Ghost; simply letting Christ make the atonement, and the sinner taking all the benefit of it. The wonders of that moment when God said in the hearing of chaos, "Let there be light," are employed by Paul who knew it by experience, to illustrate that change. For he says "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." * This fills the soul with the greatest astonishment—the freeness of forgiveness. Hear his soliloquy: How I love God; where is the burden of my guilt; am I in Heaven or on earth; is not this a new world; why, what have I done to make this change?

Sometimes the soul is conscious of a change before a hope is entertained. Whitefield asked a Scotch girl, "Do you think you have had a change of heart?" She answered, "I don't know whether my heart is changed or whether the world is changed,—one is, for every thing is new." The greatest experience of which the human mind is capable in this world, but which we do not read of in our books of mental philosophy, the greatest

* 2 Cor. 4: 6.

experience of the human soul in this world,—regeneration, is all in consequence of this one act of faith. As it was preached to the Jailer: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” “He that believeth on me,” said Jesus, “hath everlasting life.”

How may faith be obtained and sustained? The question will be asked, “How may I have such faith, especially this saving faith?”

Now observe the simplicity and beauty of the scriptural answer to this question, in correspondence with the rest of the subject. The apostles once said, Lord increase our faith. It is noticeable what answer Christ made. On another occasion, “Jesus said unto them, Have faith in God.” *Have* it. But they might have said, “This is the very trouble; we have it not—and thou sayest, Have it! We ask, How?” As we promote other exercises of the mind, by contemplating the object fitted to awaken it, so we are to obtain faith. Should I say to you, “I wish you to love a certain friend of mine;” I would make you acquainted with him and expect that acquaintance would excite your love. Would we have faith in God? Contemplate him. Would you have faith with regard to the past, the Bible, the truth of religion? Contemplate these themes. Would you have faith with regard to the future? Go to the revelation of the future in God’s Word. Would you have faith in the sense of being influenced most by un-

ERRATA.

Page 227, line 19. *read*, Faith is the gift of God.

Page 291, line 6 &c. *read*, Now there were many Marys. Beautiful name!—

“For she to whom it first was given,
Was half of earth and half of Heaven.”

seen and eternal things? Do not suffer your business, or your pleasures, or your sins to shut out the thoughts of eternal things. Think upon them, and they will make you feel and act according to your faith of them. But would you above all things know by happy experience what that justifying faith is that saves the soul? Then you must feel and acknowledge the scriptural representation of your lost state, and believe that Christ died for your sins, and therefore that you are dead in sins; that you must perish without a Saviour and then you must renounce all other dependence, and trust in the sufferings and death of Christ. Just as we trust him, when we are dying. I heard a young man say in prayer to Christ, within an hour of his departure,

“In my hand no price I bring,
Only to Thy cross I cling.”

Truth is the gift of God. It must be received as such. No price, no pains of yours can accomplish it. It is the gift of God to every one who comes and believes, desiring to be justified not by his merits but by Christ alone.

It is not hope, or anything else, which will give you peace, but faith. “Believe and be saved.” You may spend fifty years in trying to be saved in any and every other way, and then you would have to come back to this very point, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”

It is interesting to think that we are soon to see those things which now for so long a time have been objects of faith. We are to see Heaven, angels, spirits of just men made perfect, Christ, retributive justice. The veil is to be lifted. Then will that man be happy who was here influenced most by these things unseen.

It is good to think, Christian, that if the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen make you so happy, what will it be to look these things in the face?

“If such the sweetness of the streams
What must that fountain be?”

Then hope will be fulfilled and faith surrounded by full vision.

The chief object of faith is, and should be the Lord Jesus Christ. He should be loved, communed with, served, obeyed. Christ should be the principal object of our thoughts. He is the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his countenance. We should employ Peter's words: ‘Whom having not seen we love; in whom though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory—receiving the end of our faith even the salvation of our souls.’ He is coming to judge the world.

He will be a surprise and a sorrow to many. "All kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him."

"O may I see him when he comes triumphant
Dooming the unbelievers; then ascend to glory,
While our hosannas all along in passing,
Shout, the Redeemer."





FEBRUARY.

SECOND SABBATH MORNING.



THE SINNER WEIGHED.

“Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.”
DANIEL 5: 27.*

THIS is the meaning of one of the words which announced to the lost king of Babylon his doom.

It is impossible to determine why the wise men

* Dr. Adams preached this discourse in his pulpit, Union Church, Boston, Mass., December 8, 1850. In the afternoon, the Rev. Benjamin Labaree, D. D., President of Middlebury College, Vermont, preached by Dr. Adams's invitation,—but from the same text; neither being previously apprised of the other's subject. In view of this coincidence, the same subject was continued at the evening Prayer Meeting. Several hearers dated their conversion from that day.

who were summoned could not read the handwriting. They could have read any foreign language written plainly; but it may be that the writing was purposely indistinct; so that the inspired Daniel might glorify the name of the only living and true God before those idolators.

It is deeply affecting to notice in the Bible, the impressions which goodness sometimes made on the conscience and heart of woman, though in situations the most unfavorable to such impressions. When the Saviour was before Pontius Pilate, the wife of Pilate sent to him saying, "Have thou nothing to do with that just man, for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him." When Belshazzar and his wise men failed to read the handwriting on the wall, and were filled with consternation, the queen, who it seems had not been in the revelry, came into the banqueting house and said to the king, "There is a man in thy kingdom in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of thy father light and understanding, and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him," and "an excellent spirit." Now let Daniel be called and he will show the interpretation. Divine grace may have chosen her even in that corrupt court, though an idolater, like all her people, to be a vessel of mercy, "for the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished." Instances of

woman's influence with a wicked husband through her susceptibility, by the grace of God, to deep impressions from real goodness, were not confined to those days. Many a man would be saved should he give heed to the invitation of that best earthly friend whom God has given him as "an interpreter, one among a thousand," to reiterate the voices of Providence, conscience, and the Spirit of God. But Belshazzar and Pilate needed something more than good wives to save them, and so will many others who will cry when it is too late, "Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out."

This mysterious handwriting was soon deciphered and interpreted by Daniel, after he had most faithfully set the sins of the king in order before him. The words were first read by him: 'Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin.' He numbers, He numbers; He weighs; They divide. The word *Mene* is repeated in the way of emphasis, as the common phrase verily, verily, was used on solemn occasions. The word *Upharsin*, leaving off the initial and final syllables, and making a slight change in the vowels, as the Chaldee and Hebrew allowed, could be written *Peres*, which is the root of the word Upharsin, as our verb *speak*, for example, is the root of the word *spoken*. The word *Peres* as a verb means to divide; as a noun it means Persians. Daniel recognized the double intention in his interpretation, and said, "Thy kingdom is given to the Medes and Persians." I would not

enter into this narrative further than is necessary to illustrate what may be called the moral part of the sentence against this sinner: "Thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting."

We are taught by the narrative, in the first place, the following truth:

1. God's words, few and calmly expressed, can overwhelm the boldest transgressor.

Perhaps some will say that the appearance of a man's hand in the night time, writing on the plaster of the wall behind the candlestick, would overwhelm the senses of any man, be he a saint or a sinner.

This is by no means certain so far as regards good men. Daniel, for praying to God after the cruel and foolish edict was signed was cast into a den of lions, where he spent the night. Suppose now that as the lions slept, and he was sitting and leaning against the sides of the den meditating upon the wonder-working Providence that shut those ravenous mouths, he had seen a hand come forth from the rock and write some mysterious letters on the side of the pit.

Does any one suppose that Daniel's countenance would be changed, and his thoughts trouble him, so that the joints of his loins would be loosed and his knees smite one against another? By no means. Rather like young Samuel in the temple, he would say with child-like confidence and love, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." What

could he have to fear? God was his friend. No diabolical arts could write any character on the walls of his dungeon which would alarm that man, and surely God could write nothing there but words of love. Daniel would immediately conclude that it was some direction how to escape, or some revelation respecting the captivity of his nation at Babylon, soon perhaps to be terminated,—or some prophetic utterance with regard to the future time. Such a handwriting would no more terrify Daniel in his den, than John in Patmos was terrified when he saw Heaven opened.

Suppose, again, that while Paul and Silas were in the inner prison, their feet fast in the stocks and they were praying and singing praises unto God, they had been interrupted in their devotions by this mysterious hand, writing bright letters on the wall of the cell. Would they have clasped each other with a shriek? No. Paul would have said as he did on his way to Damascus, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” So far from being affrighted, they would have esteemed their prison like some Horeb, or like the cloud, the place where God talked with his chosen friends and servants.

What ails this king of Babylon? A part of a man’s hand behind the great golden or silver candlestick which floods the banquet hall with light, comes forth and silently traces some letters there. “Then the king’s countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his

loins were loosed and his knees smote one against another." Why all this panic and consternation! Why did he not interpret the apparition as Daniel in the den would have done, or the apostles in their prison? A guilty conscience needs no accuser. The wicked flee when no man pursueth; how much more when the hand of vengeance is stretched out against them. This Belshazzar was an exceedingly wicked man. Xenophon, the Greek historian, records two instances of his capricious and cruel deeds. One of his courtiers in a hunting party, being a better marksman than the king, slew two wild beasts which the king had missed; whereupon he ordered the courtier to be slain. At another time, hearing one of his concubines praising the personal appearance of a courtier, he caused him to be mutilated in a shocking and barbarous manner. His last impious deed was to call for the vessels of the Lord which had been brought from Jerusalem at the captivity, using them in his drunken revelry, and in the midst of it praising the gods of gold, and silver, and iron, and wood, and brass, and thus insulting the God of Heaven.

It fills our spirits with dread, and makes our flesh tremble, when we observe the manner in which the God of Heaven convicts and confounds this sinner. There is no voice uttered in those halls, arresting the music and the dance and the laughter. No storm of thunder breaks over the palace. No hurricane rocks it, nor earthquake.

A part of a hand comes forth behind the candlestick and writes on the plaster of the wall of the palace. No doubt those letters were brilliant beyond the lights of that gorgeous hall, for they were written by the hand that made the sun. The power and majesty of God are illustrated by the silent and quiet manner in which so great an effect was produced as the conviction and consternation of that bold transgressor. Three words, one of them repeated in the way of solemn emphasis; three words of the Most High God, written on a wall, put a stop to one of the greatest revellings and banquetings ever held in that great Babylon, the glory of the Chaldees' excellency. On those three words the eyes of a thousand lords, and of all those princes and that festive company were fixed, heedless of everything else. Three words summoned together all the learning and wisdom of that empire; three words made the monarch promise the third place of power in the kingdom to him who would explain them. Three words made an idolater and a debauchee, a proud, wicked, but all-powerful monarch, weaker than a little child. The day of judgment could not more confound him than did those three simple words of the Most High.

How dangerous to offend that God who can in a moment, by one word, convict and terrify the stoutest sinner. What forbearance there is in God, who refrains from using that power by which

with infinite ease he can fill a sinner's conscience with horror, and how solemn it is to think of this reserved power of God, this mysterious handwriting against a sinner held back, for a while; and how terrible will the day of judgment be when every sinner will be like Belshazzar before that hand; and how unutterably dreadful will hell be with that same hand forever writing, as it were, on its walls before the eyes of the sinner, words to recall the scenes of his guilt, and the strivings of the Spirit, passages of Scripture, expressions in sermons, events of Providence, broken vows. Sinners are taking courage from the silence of God, which permits them to go on in their trespasses. There is perhaps a name of a certain person, or of a place, or a date, or a few words connected with events in your history which, if God should write on the wall of your chamber to-night, would be to you as the day of judgment. You are asleep on a volcano. Sudden destruction and wrath without remedy may be your portion. "These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself; but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes. Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver."

2. The omnipresence and omniscience of God are here impressively taught.

The invading armies of the Medes and Persians

were for some time kept at bay, by that famous wall which surrounded Babylon, and by that ancient river Euphrates. Strong in his defences, the king makes a great feast and defies the invader. "Soul," he said to himself, "thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." Darius he laughs to scorn. "Is not this great Babylon the terror of the nations? Even the Jehovah of Israel has yielded his treasures to the great King of Babylon. Bring hither those vessels my father took from the temple at Jerusalem, the trophies of his victory over the people of the Lord God of Hosts." The vessels were brought, and that vast company were drinking from them, and in that same hour came there forth a man's hand and wrote upon the wall. God is not excluded from that place by walls three hundred and fifty feet in breadth, and eighty-seven feet high, or by rivers, or by armed hosts. His eyes are in every place beholding the evil and the good. God was thinking of Belshazzar in that same night when the impious king felt that he was safe from this power, and that omniscient eye looked forth at him, as it were, in those mysterious characters which appeared on the wall of his banquet house. Thus, O wicked man, there is an eye that never slumbers or sleeps, which has followed you into all your places and scenes of iniquity; has a perfect knowledge of all your transgressions, and is prepared at any moment to set them in

order before your eyes. There may be few, there may be but one beside yourself acquainted with your sin: but God's knowledge of it is of more consequence than though the universe knew it, "for God will bring every work into judgment with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil."

3. The wicked in their calamity will give anything for help.

Proclamation was made by this terrified sinner that if any man would resolve that fearful enigma on the wall, he should be next to the king and queen in office and state, the third ruler in the kingdom. This was a great offer; it was large payment for that which some one might do with the greatest ease. Queen Elizabeth, of England, is said to have exclaimed on her dying bed, "Millions of money for an inch of time." There are moments, and we shall every one of us see them, when wealth will be without value, pleasure insipid, honors disgusting; and all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, will be as when a man awakes and despises a dream. Belshazzar offered the highest possible honor to one who would merely help him understand what proved to be his death warrant. Poor soul! The third place in your kingdom for reading to you your doom. Alas! "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? And what shall a man give in exchange for

his soul?" How eager men are to get worldly possessions and pleasures and honors which will profit nothing in the day of wrath, and which in the hour of their calamity they would be willing to exchange with the true Christian for that piety which they once despised, or deemed the most miserable servitude, the enemy of all happiness.

4. We see the superiority of the righteous to the wicked.

Daniel, the captive Jew, is brought in and loaded with royal commendations and flattery; the reward is propounded to him: "If thou canst read the writing, and make known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with scarlet and have a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be the third ruler in the kingdom." We may well imagine an irresistible but secret feeling of contempt and pity in the mind of Daniel at this offer. What is it to be clothed in scarlet, what to wear a gold chain, in the sight of such a handwriting as burns there on that wall, dooming even the first ruler in the kingdom to a miserable end? Daniel might then say with David, "Surely thou didst set them in slippery places; thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors." With the true dignity and superiority of a child of God, Daniel replies to the gorgeous offer of the king, "Let thy gifts be to thyself; and give thy rewards to another: yet I

will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation. How small the royal sinner appears before the captive saint. So it will be in the great day of doom with regard to sinners.

As David says again, "Like sheep they are laid in the grave;" Sheep? Grave? Yes, diseased, buried; not for food. But yes:—"Death shall feed on them, and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning." Then the wicked would change places with the righteous; then they would give them all they have for their hope in Christ; then they will despise themselves to see how infinitely inferior they are to the poorest Christian, with all their talents and emblazoned names, and earthly happiness, and learning and wealth. If we know these things, why do any of us forget God, and refuse to be numbered with his chosen people?

Every one of us, in his character and conduct, is weighed by a patient and just God.

Mark the expression, "*Thou art weighed.*" The object in weighing anything is to see if it is a fair equivalent. Did God *weigh* Belshazzar? It implies patience, and a considerate act of God towards such a sinner. No sinner is ever cut off in his sins without previous forbearance, consideration, and a just, deliberate judgment on the part of God; for he that is "suddenly cut off and that without remedy," is beforehand "often reproved." Is it not

an affecting view which is here given us of God's patience, and of his calm justice, that he informs the sinner whom he is about to destroy that he has been justly weighed; that every allowance has been made for him; that all deserved credit has been given to him, and that however dreadful his punishment may be, it will be administered by even-handed justice?

It is a singular and affecting method of disclosing his doom to a wicked man. We might rather suppose that the word would have been: Prepare to die; or some peremptory mandate, implying only the stern, inexorable spirit of the Judge. But instead of this, the sinful monarch is informed that God has treated him with infinite patience, and his doom is the result of a fair probation.

Mark, too, the exceeding mildness and moderation implied in the other word as directed to such a great offender: "found wanting." "Thou art weighed in the balances and *found wanting*." Is this all which can be said of him? "Wanting?" Is he a mere negative character, are the sins of such a man sins of omission only? No, but on the contrary, he has filled up the measure of his iniquity. It is the method which divine justice chose to express itself, for the justice of God can afford to be mild in its expressions, having the forces of omnipotence to sustain and execute its decisions. Besides, as God will render to every man according to his works, it is properly said that

the sinner, in his character and conduct is weighed, and his being found wanting in the fulfilment of his infinite obligations to his God, is all which is necessary to pull down upon him the vengeance of Heaven.

Suppose now, dear hearer, that we approach the scales of Divine justice, and seek to know before the day of final trial comes, how we shall be estimated, as things now are with us, in that day of decision, from which there is no appeal. How is it, then, with you?

The sum of all this sinner's guilt which Daniel brought to his view, was in these words: "And the God in whose hands thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, thou *hast not glorified*." This is the indictment. How is it with you, sinful man? Will you be weighed as to your character and conduct in this respect?

Your obligation is to glorify God, in your body and in your spirit which are God's; to live not unto yourself, for you are not your own. Say now, Is it true or not that you have made the glory of God the great object of your existence? Have you done what you have mainly because you thought that it would please and honor God; have you abstained from anything because you would not displease him? Have others been led to fear God by your example? If you ask what it is to glorify God, here is our answer: it is by your example to make others think of God, fear and obey him. Have you glorified him before your young com-

panions, showing them when they were rude and wicked, profane and otherwise sinful, that you fear God? If you are the head of a family, have your children and others been made to feel that you fear God? The most common and obvious sign of your doing so would be to bow the knee in their presence. Do they ever hear from your lips worship paid to Jehovah? How is it with regard to the Sabbath? In no way can we show our fear of God more reverently than by a conscientious observance of that day, which he has commanded us to keep holy. Do you spend it so that it would be well for the whole community to follow your example? God says, "Verily, my Sabbaths ye shall keep." "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." How will your conduct weigh in this respect?

There are obligations of a more tender and affecting kind. Your Saviour has redeemed you with his own blood that you might not live unto yourself, but unto him that died for you and rose again. All that you have and are he claims in virtue of the great love wherewith he has loved you. Let us put into the scale all that you have ever done for Jesus, from gratitude to Christ, from a sense of obligation to Christ, your best friend, your Saviour. How long would it take you to collect it? How much does it weigh?

With regard to your conduct — has it not been characterized by lightness and frivolity? Let us weigh your actions in this respect; are they

marked with propriety, or are they foolish? Your words — are they apt to be idle words, foolish jesting, vain conversation? How will these weigh? Will they not weigh like those gases, lighter than the atmosphere, which when confined, as in a balloon, for example, lift up great weights from the earth? So are not your words exceedingly light, and your thoughts vain?

What sort of a child are you with regard to your parents? How will your feelings and words and conduct weigh in God's balances against that commandment, "Honor thy father and thy mother; that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee?" So with regard to everything for which we must give account in the day of God; do you think that you can abide the day of his coming, or stand when he appeareth? Would you be willing that a just and holy God should weigh your character and conduct tonight; that the Saviour should stand by and call for your feelings and conduct toward him, and lay them in the scale, and that the Holy Ghost should produce the result of his gracious strivings with you, and your treatment of his grace? I ask, suppose that God should write with his finger on the wall of your room the result of his examination. Of how many would these words be true, "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting."

There is an hour approaching when the result

of God's judgment concerning each of us will be known. To some it will be a fearful surprise. In such an hour as they think not they will discover that God has fixed his opinion and judgment concerning them, never to be changed, and that they must abide forever by his dread decision.

Belshazzar's fate recorded in the Word of God for an instruction, should solemnly warn you, O sinner, and you, thoughtless youth, that God is ready to say of you that which was said of this monarch, in the handwriting of his death warrant. May a suitable fear take possession of you, and may you cry out, "What shall we do?" There is one hope for you, and but one. And that is in the atoning death and merits of an injured Saviour. Never can you achieve good works sufficient to counterbalance your sins. They are like mountains, and have gone up over your heads. But Christ has atoned for all your sins. I seem to see you to-night trembling before God in this world of mercy, while justice holds up her scales, God's law in one extending to the thoughts and intents of the heart, and in the other lighter than all, your character and your life. You begin to feel that all is lost: you cry for pity: you confess yourself justly condemned, and despair of help from yourself. A man comes near and lays something in that elevated scale. It is Jesus, the sinner's friend; he turns his eye upon you, and says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved all the ends of the earth; for I am

God, and there is none else." I hear you say, "Jesus, Saviour, have mercy on me. Thy cross has satisfied the law of God; thy sufferings for me are accepted by Divine justice, and I plead them." Therefore he lays that semblance of his cross upon your scale: it sinks: a ray of hope gilds your face; joy at length beams from it; a song breaks forth from your lips:

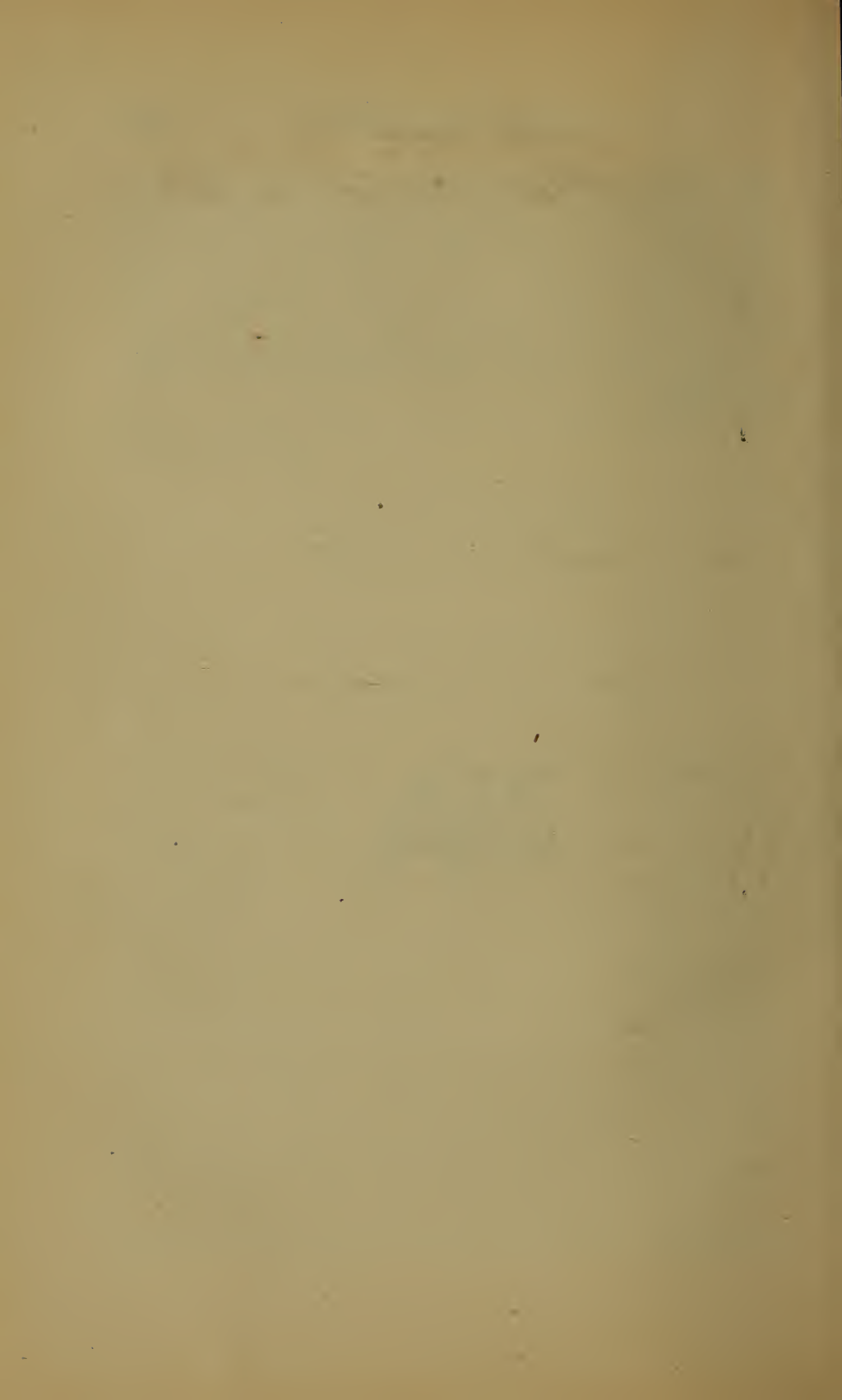
"My faith would lay her hand,
On that dear head of thine,
While like a penitent I stand,
And there confess my sin.

My soul looks back to see
The burdens thou didst bear,
When hanging on the cursed tree;
And hopes her guilt was there."

Come, sinner, ere the handwriting appears to your condemnation, and mercy takes her flight from you forever. The King of kings and Lord of lords regards no man for his name, or place, or reputation, but pours contempt upon princes, abhors the hypocrite, and will not clear the guilty. Come, make your peace with him. Hell with its Belshazzars, and Ahabs, and Jezebels, and Sauls, and other giants in sin, awaits you. There may be no time to spare. Death, that king of terrors, with all his train may be at your very gate. "In that same night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain." The Medes had succeeded in draining the river, and over its channel, and through a

gate which the intoxicated guard had left open, they rushed in and slew this king from whom God had departed forever. The words of the text will surely be fulfilled in you, except ye repent. Repent, repent, that iniquity may not be your ruin. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."







FEBRUARY.

SECOND SABBATH AFTERNOON.

INQUIRERS DESCRIBED AND DIRECTED.

“For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.”

—MATTHEW 7: 8.

WE always get whatever is reasonable from reasonable persons who have the ability and disposition to help us. This I understand to be the meaning of Christ in the text; it being expressed, according to the oriental custom, with varied forms of illustration.

The declaration of this general truth that reasonable requests of reasonable persons are, as a general thing, successful was intended to illustrate and enforce the exhortation in the preceding verse: “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall

find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." The argument is, that as requests, and search, and efforts to enter places are, under proper circumstances, ordinarily successful, so the requests which you make of God will be successful. There is, to say the least, as much reason to look for success in your efforts to obtain favors from him as there is in common affairs in which we always succeed under reasonable conditions. In another place the Saviour strengthens his declaration on this subject by arguing that if success be the ordinary result of applications on the part of children to their parents, much more will God bestow good things, especially the greatest of all gifts, his Holy Spirit, upon those who seek him.

This declaration of Christ opens before us a most encouraging truth, in connection with our highest interests, which it appears we may promote in the highest measure by securing the Divine favor in answer to every reasonable request. I intend to apply the subject particularly to those who have in times past sought, or who may now be seeking to know the truth, and to obtain the salvation of their souls. It is true of all such persons as it is of others, that Every one that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

But many will say, This contradicts our experience. We have long sought to know the truth, and have been inquirers after the way to be saved, but we have never succeeded in our search. I answer,

This must be owing to the neglect of those conditions to which allusion has already been made. Many, very many, in common things ask and seek and knock, who never succeed. Some will desire to know who they are and how to avoid their mistake, and how to comply with those conditions on fulfilling which every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it is opened.

To meet this desire, I wish to show the different ways in which men inquire respecting the truth and the things pertaining to salvation. Taking the New Testament history for our guide, I propose then at this time to consider *the different kinds of inquirers on the subject of religion.*

I. There are some inquirers who are opposers to religion. This may seem strange to some at first, but we shall see that it is true.

Of opposers to religion who have been found inquirers on the subject we may mention the Scribes and Pharisees in the time of Christ. They came to him seeking a sign of his Messiahship: "What sign showest thou that thou doest those things?" Surely it is not a fault to ask for the proof of an important thing. But the inquiry was made with a spirit of hostility to religion and to Christ. These men wished Christ to stake his authority and the truth of his teachings on some miracle which should perhaps be agreed on by them, or by which the

Saviour should challenge the world to examine the proofs of his being the Christ. Had Christ thus rested his cause on a miracle, it would have been easy for these opposers, and they knew it, to overthrow his claims in the minds of many. For as it was, they imputed his works to a league with Satan: "He hath a devil and is mad, why hear ye him?" Or it would have been easy for them to suborn false witnesses, as they did at his trial, to contradict the miracle, or they would have imputed it to sleight of hand or other craft, and as they forged a falsehood respecting the resurrection of Christ, so they would have done perhaps with regard to any miracle on which the credit of Christianity might have been rested. The Saviour wisely forbore to gratify their demand. He knew that they would impute his refusal to wrong motives. He chose to let them scoff at him, rather than gratify their unreasonable demand. It is said, "He sighed deeply in his spirit saying, Why doth this generation seek after a sign?" It must have affected him therefore, with great grief. Why did he heave this sigh? No doubt with a feeling of sadness that all his mighty signs and wonders had been lost upon them; for then was fulfilled the saying of Isaiah, "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" It is said that he left them and departed.

The same spirit of opposition to Christianity prompted them when they came with the question,

“By what authority doest thou these things, and who gave thee this authority?” This question was far from being the offspring of an honest desire to be well assured of the Saviour’s divine mission, but was an attempt to excite a controversy and entangle the Saviour in his talk. With consummate address the Saviour, puts a question to them which triumphantly closes the dispute. They had rejected John the Baptist as they now rejected Christ and for the same reason, that they were opposed to experimental religion.

So it seems that questions may be asked on the subject of religion which are prompted merely by a spirit of opposition. The declaration in the text, “Every one that asketh receiveth,” does not of course apply to such cases. No one asking a favor of another in such a state of mind could expect to obtain it; nor if he should seek a piece of common information with that temper would he have a right to look for even a civil answer. Should you in this temper ask in the street to be directed, you would fail of an answer. Or should you thus knock you would be refused admittance.

Now it will not be denied that some, with this feeling of opposition in their hearts, perhaps unconscious to what extent, do inquire on the subject of religion. Passages of Scripture sometimes excite such a feeling, and lead to questionings in a querulous tone. For example, it is written, “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink

his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day." The feeling which this excites in some is like that of the Jews who said, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" — instead of saying, but with knowledge of the full import of the Saviour's words, "Lord, evermore give us this bread." Parables were used for this purpose to try the temper of those who heard them.

So with regard to the doctrines of the Gospel. There is a way of asking questions respecting the mystery of the Trinity, and the supreme Deity of Christ, and the nature and efficacy of the atonement, which is far from indicating the spirit of a humble inquirer. Christ says, "Except ye receive the Kingdom of God as a little child, ye shall in no wise enter therein." It is most interesting to notice the touching simplicity with which a little child asks questions and receives answers. How disposed to credulity is a little child; you may say anything however astonishing, and the information is received with an expression of wonder, it may be, yet with faith. This is the way in which we must ask questions in religion and with the same simplicity receive knowledge. If we are in doubt upon any doctrine of the Bible, we have only to assume a childlike disposition with regard to it, and then that promise will be fulfilled: "The meek will he guide in judgment the meek will he teach his

way." Anything like an angry, sullen, captious, disputatious, doubting, temper will surely fail of receiving answers of peace. By this, perhaps, we may know why we have failed thus far to be settled in our opinions on the subject of religion, and to obtain rest to our souls. We must bow our necks, the Saviour tells us. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

II. Another class of those who inquire on the subject of religion may be termed *careless inquirers*.

To this class we may assign Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor. "Pilate said unto" Jesus, "Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am, a king," — or, I am that which thou sayest, namely, a king. "To this end was I born, and for this came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. Pilate saith unto him, What is truth?" But without waiting for an answer he went out.

His feeling seemed to be, Here is a controversy between you, the Christ, and the Jews; two conflicting systems meet at my tribunal; how am I to know which of them is true? "Truth?" he seems to say; — "If any one will decisively settle for us that question, What is truth, we may believe. Amid the dissensions of religious teachers, the name religious truth seems a mere phantom that

mocks our pursuit. What is truth?" In very much this spirit many men treat the subject of religion. Differences, among Christian denominations, they say, make it impossible for them to determine what is truth, and they feel acquitted of any obligation to believe, because there is so much controversy and variance of opinion. Some look on all Christian sects as mere dogmatists who are quarrelling about mysteries which no man can solve, and they conclude that the whole duty of man consists in doing, as they express it, "about right," by treating others well, and taking the comfort of this life. Still that solemn word of Christ remains, "He that believeth not shall be damned." The law of God does not refer merely to our conduct towards men: we have duties to God, and the right performance of these depends on the knowing in what relation we stand to him, whether as sinners, or as just persons who need no repentance; and what is the method of reconciliation to him. We cannot blink these great and solemn questions; all our interests for eternity depend on our understanding them; and for this God has provided sufficient means in his Holy Word, and in his promised Spirit freely given to all who ask aright. It is said, how then if God who teaches all who seek aright, does it happen that good men differ so widely? I answer, Pious men differ about non-essentials owing to their different circumstances of truth, education, association, habits, tastes; but

they do not differ about one single truth which is essential; not one. There are very few truths which are essential to salvation. One is, the belief in one only living and true God. Good men are agreed on that point. Another is, Our fallen and sinful and ruined state by nature. Another is, The necessity of regeneration; and another, the great fundamental truth of all is, An atonement for sin. You cannot find two pious men in any age or place who differ with regard to these. They who reject these, reject the plain testimony of Scripture, by explaining it away. So that there is no discrepancy between Christian believers in that which is essential to salvation; and if Pilate asks, What is truth, we tell him, That which all believers concur to receive as essential to salvation. Let him ask, Where is the sun; whence comes the rain; whither do the rivers run; the common observation of the world on these questions is no more concurrent than is the belief of pious men with regard to the only essential question in religion, What must I do to be saved? Suppose that some are Congregationalists, and others Presbyterians, and others Episcopalians, and others Baptists, and others Methodists, and one says, 'What is truth? I know not what to believe.' They with one voice will tell him,—yes with one voice they will tell him, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Then you may select a form of church government to suit your taste, and your

mode of worship, and be baptized as you please, and baptize your children or not — so far as your personal salvation is concerned. And while we severally believe that the Scriptures are on our side and feel sure that we are right and our Christian brethren are wrong, we give them cordially the right hand of fellowship, believing that, through the grace of the Lord Jesus “we shall be saved even as they,” and they even as we. Some say to you, But if you shake the head and say, What *is* truth, —and go out,—know that there is such a thing as essential truth, essential to your acceptance with God and to your eternal safety; and that heaven and earth shall pass away but Christ’s word shall not pass away.

III. Another class of inquirers are the *serious*. They are a deeply interesting class of persons in all our congregations. They may be represented in general by Nicodemus, the ruler of the Jews.

One night when the Saviour was in the house, the toils of the day being finished, this Jewish ruler, a member of the Sanhedrim, a man of wealth, as we subsequently read, and of learning and great prudence, entered the place where Jesus was sitting. It was a deeply interesting scene. There was the humble man of Nazareth, and before him stood one of the dignitaries of the nation. His address is respectful yet cautious. “Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man

can do these miracles which thou doest, except God be with him." This was cautious and guarded; it was dignified and reserved; and evidently suited, as it was intended, to elicit something from the Great Teacher. It was, perhaps, enough for the ruler to say, in the beginning; for he was by no means settled in his opinions, and indeed was totally ignorant with regard to the elements of Christian knowledge. But he was not an opposer, nor was he a careless inquirer. He was satisfied that the Saviour was entitled to a favorable reception; he signified this, and waited for further light.

How was he rewarded? The Saviour immediately announced to him the great truth, the indispensable necessity of a change of heart. Here we have an illustration of the Saviour's unequalled, divine skill and kindness as a religious teacher. How abrupt seems his reply to that remark of Nicodemus: "We know that thou art a teacher come from God." "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." What had this to do with the introductory confession of Nicodemus?

The Saviour saw at once the state of his heart. He was a serious inquirer, and Jesus opened to him in a moment the necessity of a change of heart. It seems as though He would say to him, you have come to me to converse on the subject of religion—perhaps to discuss certain questions; all this may

be well in its place ; but there is something else of the first importance, and without which all knowledge is useless, and that is, You must be born again.

You may change your opinions, but still you are not prepared for Heaven. You may cease to be a Jew and become a nominal Christian, but that is not enough. Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

How much better was this mode of dealing with him than to discuss questions about externals, or even to prove his Messiahship more fully. The Saviour put him immediately upon the work of searching his own heart, and using the means of conversion. The Saviour did not stop with telling him he must be converted ; he told him how he must experience it ; and he proceeded to teach him the great fundamental truth of an atonement for sin. “ And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up : that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” What a conversation ! Oh what an inquiry meeting, though but one inquirer was present ! What a model for Christian ministers in dealing with inquiring souls, and what a guide to all serious inquirers on the subject of religion !

We are informed in the New Testament history, of the consequence of this conversation. Nicodemus became a follower of Christ, not openly, but

in his place in the Council he interposed a word which dispersed the excited people. "Doth our law judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doeth?" But a most decisive proof of his love to Christ took place at the Saviour's burial. He joined with Joseph of Arimathea to entomb the body of our Lord, bringing with him "a mixture of myrrh and aloes about a hundred pounds weight." There he made a public profession of his faith in Christ by taking from the cross, yes, the ignominious cross, the body of the insulted Jesus, and espousing his cause by giving those precious remains an honorable burial. If any of my hearers are serious inquirers on the subject of religion, let them come to Christ like Nicodemus, confessing all that they feel, going as far as they feel prepared to go, walking according to the light which they have received, and they will find that he who led Nicodemus into the way of eternal life, will bestow the same grace on them. One thing in particular they will observe. Nicodemus does not seem to have been awakened to any sense of his guilt; he does not cry, "What must I do to be saved?" But he wished to know the truth. He had an inquiring mind, and by seeking Christ as his great instructor, he found salvation. Though you may not have all the vivid feelings you may desire, "Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you."

IV. There is one other class of inquirers, and that is, *anxious inquirers*.

The crucifiers of Christ on the day of Pentecost, and the Jailor at Philippi, are instances. The former, pricked in their hearts, cried, Men and brethren, what must we do? The Jailor at midnight called for a light, and sprang in and came trembling and fell down before Paul and Silas, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? These are the cases which we love to see, and these are the most hopeful as it regards a speedy reconciliation to God. It is a state of mind which cannot, in the nature of things, last long; the feelings are too intense; there must be relief, and it is soon found either in going back to some degree of unconcern, or in accepting the offers of mercy through Christ. To this state of mind, in some of its forms, it is necessary to be brought, in order to accept Christ. For to become a Christian is to accept of offered mercy; and who can accept of mercy until he feels that he needs it, and how can we feel that we need it, until we have some feelings, whatever they may be, which will lead us to say, "What must I do to be saved?" He, then, that can awake to the fullest sense of his need, shall find himself best prepared to enter into that door of safety which stands open to receive him. He who comes to the fountain with the greatest thirst shall find the greatest refreshment. He that comes with no money to the

feast, and he alone, shall have "wine and milk without money and without price."

Permit me to ask my hearers, Are any of you inquirers in any sense, with regard to the subject of religion? Do you feel the least interest in the greatest of all subjects, in the most thrilling truths, in these four solemn and awful realities, Death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell, each of which concerns you personally, as much as any other human being. You have many cares and ask many questions, it may be, and are anxious about your temporal concerns, but are you an inquirer with regard to religion and eternal life? Permit me to say, affectionately, you should be; and there is nothing which more concerns you than to be such an inquirer. Is all well with you with regard to that immortal soul, with its capabilities of joy and sorrow?

"What are thy hopes beyond the grave,
How stands that dread account?"

How is it between you and your God? Have Christ and you ever made a covenant with each other? How do you stand affected with regard to the Holy Spirit? Do you know by experience what it is to be born again; to look with an eye of faith to Christ, lifted up like the brazen serpent, to heal your soul? Have you understood by experimental knowledge that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have ever-

lasting life?" If you do not know these things, can you be said to know anything of vital importance? How can you die as you now are, and what will become of you if you should?

If you are an inquirer, is it possible that you are an opposer of religion, and ask questions with an unhappy feeling of hostility? Remember how the Saviour met Saul of Tarsus on his way to Damascus, and remonstrated with him, and how that man became an heir of grace, and now is one of the suns in the firmament of Heaven. So you may be a happy spirit forever; but be not found, I pray you, fighting against God.

Perhaps you are a careless inquirer, not in earnest, disposed to trifle, orthodox in opinion, and yet easily induced to smile at serious things, and turn them into pleasantry, if not ridicule. How you will feel when conscience awakes, and you with your clear light and convictions see that you made light of the great concerns of eternity. Be persuaded to think and act seriously and decisively; for it is for your life, and thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.

If you are an intellectual inquirer, debating with yourself about forms of doctrine and modes of religion, remember the Saviour's treatment of Nicodemus, and see in it your need, and then direct all your efforts to the experience of that great change by which you will be fully enlightened on all the subject of divine truth, beside being united to

Christ by adoption into God's family. Speculate till you die, but you cannot enter the kingdom of God by that means. Apply to the Holy Ghost for the renewal of your nature, and he will seal you, through a Saviour's blood, unto the day of redemption.

If I speak now to some soul who feels the burden of guilt, I have only to say, Christ is more ready to forgive you and save you than you are to be saved. Dissatisfied with yourself, and conscious that you are not what you ought to be, come to Christ and find rest unto your soul. Let me lay these words of the Saviour like balm on your wounded heart: "For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened." Surely we have no excuse if we do not come to the knowledge of the truth, or if we fail to secure a part in this great salvation. Then "seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near." Seek him earnestly, as you have sought something this week; then will be fulfilled that clear and unequivocal promise, "Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."



FEBRUARY.

THIRD SABBATH MORNING.



THE JUSTICE OF PARDON.

“Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old?

Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the first of my body for the sin of my soul?”

—MICAH 6: 6, 7.

IT is the natural desire and effort of the awakened conscience everywhere to know how sinful man can be at peace with God. If the prophets themselves, inspired of God, put such questions as these: “How shall man be just with God;” and again, “Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the most high God.

Shall I come before him with burnt offerings ? ” — If holy men proposed such questions, it must be that there is in the heart of man a deep-seated solicitude on this subject which will show itself whenever we are convinced of sin. The thoughts of our hearts are something like this : I have been a great sinner. God has just occasion to be displeased with me for my past life. I never can satisfy the Most High for past misconduct. Should I begin to-day and attempt to be a Christian, I should be appalled with the difficulties of the work.

Owing to such feelings, many abandon the hope of being otherwise than they are. It is a formidable thing which they have no courage to attempt. In some cases there is a sense of guiltiness which makes them hide themselves from the thought of having anything to do with a holy God.

How can this difficulty be reached and overcome ? We do not see that anything which we can do or feel will be a sufficient recompense for our sins, and establish suitable relations between ourselves and God. Even when we are told that there is only one way to be saved ; “neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under Heaven given among men whereby we must be saved ;” and the great revealed truth of justification without merit is explained ; in short, when we are told that salvation is a free gift, that for Christ’s sake our past sins will all be forgiven without money and without price, and that we

have only to accept of pardon and eternal life through Christ, and we shall have them, and that all which we can be permitted to do in securing salvation is to believe on him who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification, — how is this apt to strike our minds? What feelings does it awaken? In some there is a decided feeling of repugnance.

The freeness of the Gospel is with some of us an objection to it.

The reason for this is, *We have a sense of justice which the freeness of the gospel does not satisfy. We feel that it is not right that we should be forgiven for nothing.* We know that we have sinned. In the language of another, we feel disposed to say, "I have sinned, what shall I do unto thee, O thou preserver of men?" * Sin requires a satisfaction to God, but to be pardoned without making any such satisfaction appears to us unjust and in every way unjustifiable.

The Gospel as explained seems to us almost like going to a penitentiary and saying to the convicts, "A ransom has been paid for you, the law is satisfied, you may go free." The innate sense of justice revolts at such a step; the voice of justice rather says, "The soul that sinneth it shall die." Could we be permitted to suffer in some degree for our sins, we would feel that we had made proper satisfaction for these offences; but to have free pardon

* Job 7: 20.

preached to us does violence to our convictions of what is in every way suitable.

It is common to meet with the objection in conversing with those who are more or less interested in seeking their salvation. Tell them to fast, or perform any austerity, or to read and pray; in short, perform any duty in order to be at peace, and they will gladly do it. They cannot feel that it is right for them to be forgiven and saved without being made to do or suffer something which will constitute a recompense for all the evil which they have done.

My subject is, The Justice of Pardon.

What suffering or punishment would any of us suppose would be a just recompense for our sins? We feel that we ought to satisfy the Most High God for such a life as ours. We feel that is no light thing which can be an adequate atonement on our part for our sins. Sometimes, perhaps, we feel that anything short of endless punishment we would willingly endure, either to expiate our guilt, and make what we feel to be a just satisfaction to God, or to procure Heaven. Command us to do anything, and we will do it, to be at peace with God, to escape hell and secure Heaven.

We will meet our hearts on their own ground and reason with them. Suppose that in order to save our souls, God requires of us that we submit to be put to death by crucifixion. In order to do this, we are hurried through the form of a trial

with all possible injustice and cruelty, and condemned to die. Before the dreadful hour arrives, our friends all flee from us and leave us sitting among some people ignorant, and coarse, and malignant, who have great spite against us, and take that opportunity to express it. They strike us with their hands; one or two of them deliberately spit in our face; then requiring amusement to relieve the monotony of their malice, they blindfold our eyes, and taking turns to strike us, make us guess which of them inflicted the blow. Then they put upon us a dress which has some ludicrous appearance of state and pomp, and make obeisance with what an English poet calls "grinning infamy" in their faces. By this time we would probably begin to think, This is the lowest depth of ignominy. Were there ever forms of degradation beyond these?

But the tragedy is not over. We must die, and die by crucifixion, which scientific men tell us is the most exquisite torture, and more painful than any other death. They lay a cross on the earth, and with nails and hammer fasten each hand to the transverse beam, and fixing our feet one over the other, drive a spike through them both. They lift the cross in the air, and set it violently in the hole dug for it in the earth; the blood streams down in rills; and in bodily pain we writhe several hours before death comes to our release. Who are these by our side? Two highwaymen whom our

executioners have taken the opportunity to gibbet with us; and so we die with pain of body and anguish of mind to the utmost pitch of suffering.

All this is to atone for our sins. Would we suppose after all this, that we had been punished enough? We should say, I could not be punished more except by protracting my sufferings, and keeping me, as it were, on this lake of fire.

What effect would all this have on our mind? We should say, "I have not satisfied my moral sensibilities. I deserved all this, but I do not yet feel at peace with God. I doubt whether anything I can do will be a sufficient recompense for my guilt." Then what can be done to save us? It appears that our own sufferings can not do it. We object to be forgiven for nothing, and yet we cannot satisfy God or ourselves by any recompense we can offer. And yet we are unwilling to be forgiven for nothing. We still demand satisfaction to divine justice.

But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested. We are not, we cannot be forgiven for nothing. It cost more to offer pardon to us freely, than anything which God ever did. There is one who suffered for us that which I have now described as our own punishment. We are not forgiven but at an expense which no created intellect can compute. "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission." One took our place

and bore our sins in his own body on the tree. Ponder those words: "Who his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree." Who was this suffering mediator?

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." "By whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." The history of his atoning death, how perfectly familiar to us all! We behold him covered with shame and the lowest ignominy. We see him nailed and pierced and dying on the cross between two thieves. This was all for us.

"For me these pangs his soul assail,
For me this death was borne;
My sins gave sharpness to the nail,
And pointed every thorn."

Does not the Scripture justify this? Yes, in these words and many other places. "He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised

for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

And now will we complain that free forgiveness is too easy a way of salvation? It is easy for us,—but was it easy for the Redeemer? It costs us nothing. But what did it cost him! We are pardoned and saved, as it were, for nothing on our part but the acceptance of it, and the consequent love which we will feel for it; but we were not redeemed at a light price. "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." No, we cannot plead when God offers us pardon and Heaven without money and without price:—This is unjust. I have not made satisfaction to God. This is like a delivery of prisoners from jail, without regard to justice and character.

But we may say, It is still true that I do nothing toward my redemption, and I feel that I *should* make some recompense to God for my sins. If we make any, we must make a just recompense. We must do all which we can. Now what in the nature of things is that? God alone can teach us on this point. The lawyer only is adequate to tell us what the penalty is which he has affixed to the violation of his law. Should we undertake to recompense God for our sins, we must lie down forever in hell. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die."

“Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” Christ will say to those who are not redeemed, “Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.” Thus we see what the proper recompense to Divine justice would be should we undertake to make it. Can we make it? Will we make it? “Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?” The law of God is the law of the universe, and must be maintained. Can we satisfy that law? Yes, by our everlasting punishment, and by nothing short of it, as the final Judge shows in the twenty-fifth of Matthew.

Now if our sense of justice makes us unwilling to be forgiven unless we can satisfy divine justice, we must prepare ourselves for the sacrifice, and be a whole burnt offering forever. So that we come to this alternative: Will we satisfy divine justice, or shall another satisfy it? On this question the world is divided into two classes, believers and unbelievers. All of the second class are trying some other way to atone for their sins than God has provided. They have helped to prove the doctrine of atonement without formally attempting to do so.

This sense of justice, this unwillingness to be forgiven for nothing, all these efforts to find or make some recompense to God for our past wickedness, in short, this inquiry, “Wherewith shall

we come before the Lord and bow ourselves before the Most High God," and this looking about for thousands of rams and rivers of oil, and Lebanons and the first born for an offering to God for sin, is a very strong presumptive evidence in favor of an atonement. It is presumptive evidence in this respect and thus far: That it shows an atonement to be in accordance with our natural feelings; there is a mutual adaptedness between them. This, however, is not the proof on which that great truth of an expiatory sacrifice depends. The proof is in the express declarations of the Bible. "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." "And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

No doubt it is more agreeable to our natural feelings to be our own saviours. It is extremely

humbling to admit that we can do nothing in the way of satisfying divine justice. Attempting to do this, many spend years of fruitless effort; and without any question, there are some here who have thus far been kept out of the kingdom of Heaven by efforts to work out their own justification, rather than be dependent on the righteousness of another. "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth."*

The simple truth contained in the gospel is this: "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." This expresses the sum and substance of the gospel. The ungodly,—we are all such by nature. We were without strength, had no power to satisfy divine justice; then Christ died for us. He bare our sins in his own body on the tree. So that the only condition of being saved is thus expressed: "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."† This is free grace; we are pardoned if we confess our sins for Christ's sake, provided we rely on him, and accept him as the substitute for us in view of divine justice. Suppose, now, that

* Romans 10: 3, 4.

† Romans 4: 5.

you are seeking to be saved, as some of you are. What should you do, and how should you feel? You should go to God just as you are, without waiting to be better, confess that you have nothing to recommend you to him, but you have sinned and must perish without his help; then signify your acceptance of God's righteousness to be imputed to you, and plead the sufferings and death of Christ as the reason why you ask and hope to be forgiven. In this way alone will you ever be saved. All the ransomed spirits in glory were saved in this way, and casting their crowns before Christ, they say, "Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

Why should you object to being saved in this way? Perhaps you say, It is too simple. It is exceedingly simple. It is wonderfully simple. Believing on a suffering Redeemer, and accepting this death as an atonement for your sins, you are justified and saved. Is this simplicity in the plan of redemption an objection to it? Simplicity characterizes all the natural works of God. Think of the solar system. Here is a central sun and planets revolving around him, crossing, some of them, the orbits of others, yet preserving their proper distances, exactly fulfilling their appointed times. Think of this huge earth hung on nothing, flying through space with such inconceivable velocity,

and other planets in like manner, going round the sun. What complicated machinery, what stupendous clock-work is it which keeps this system in its order? There is none. It is the simple law of gravitation. All bodies tend to the centre. The planets incline to fall into the sun, but the force of their revolution throws them off, and these two tendencies balance each other, and so they fly through space, and the hours and all the beautiful vicissitudes of day and night and seasons are the consequence. What simplicity! Does this offend you? Neither should the simplicity of the gospel. By nature men are all like Naaman, the Syrian. "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?"

But you say, this leaves men no work to do. What would you do, poor worm, should you undertake to satisfy God for your rebellion? We have already answered this question. You must die, crushed beneath the penalty of your sins. In a burning dwelling at midnight, surrounded by smoke and fire, if a friend should come to bear you in his arms to a place of safety at the risk of his own life, you might as well say, This leaves me nothing to do for my salvation. "True," he replies, "only give yourself up to me." Yes, you can do something; can you not love the Friend who died for you?

Are you willing to be saved in God's way? He has provided a way which cost an infinite price.

Such sufferings were never endured ; and such humiliation and such a sacrifice made by the coequal son in your nature never can be equalled. God is satisfied with it, however men may feel about it. I repeat : “ God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Will you be saved in this way? Are you willing to surrender yourself into the hands of your God, pleading the merits of Jesus, and hoping for pardon because he has died?

In view of what has been said, we must admit,

1. That if we are not saved, it will not be the fault of God. He has made full atonement for sins. He has made a great supper, and bidden many, “ Come, for all things are ready.” “ He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.” Then,

2. If we are not saved, it must be our own fault. What can the reason be?

The reason will be, perhaps, we are not willing to be saved on these terms. To the last some prescribe to God how to save them, and these he justly leaves to perish. “ For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

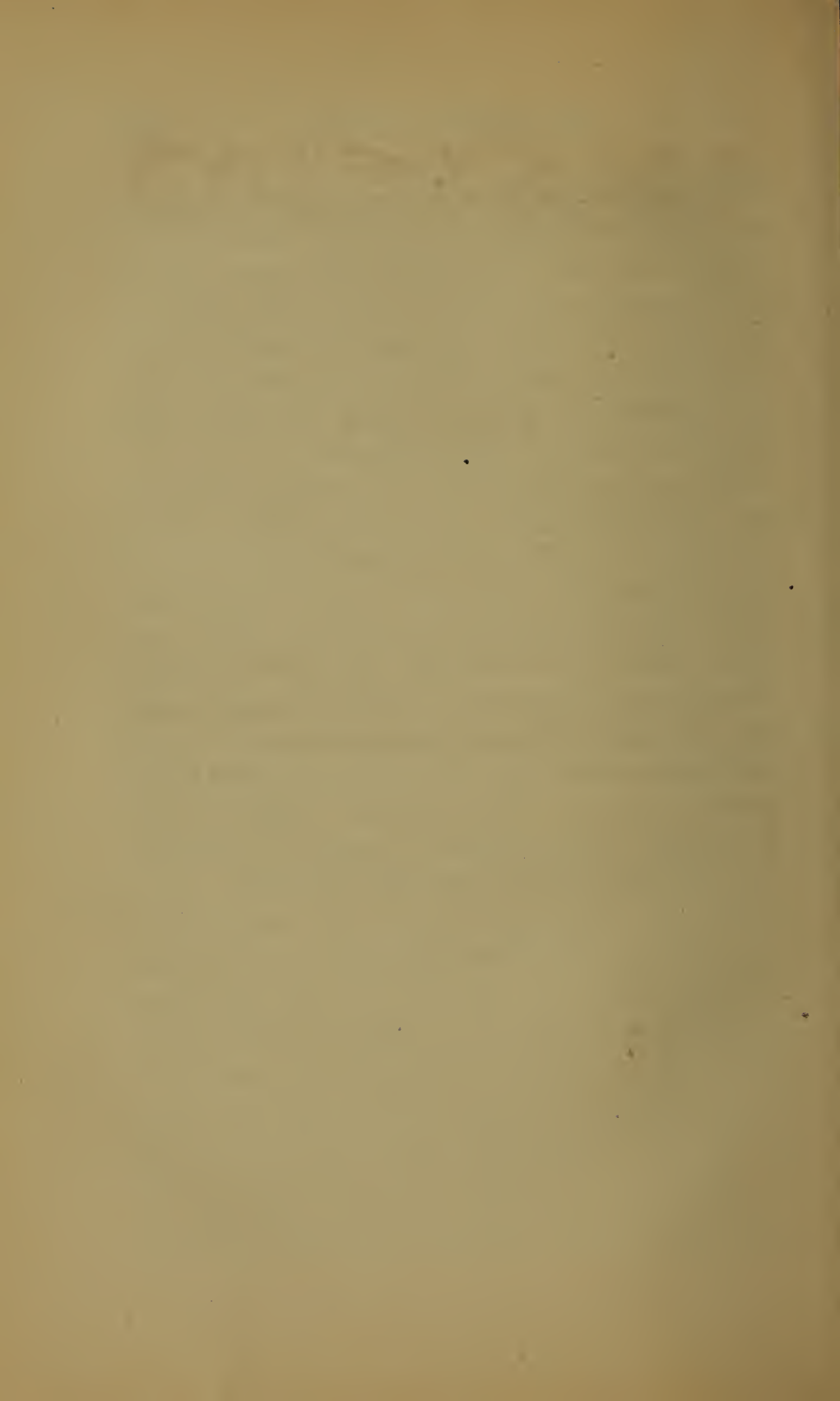
Or else we are unwilling to believe that sin can be forgiven in this way. It may seem too much to believe — that God will forgive sin so freely. If we take this ground, we must remember that unbelieving lord who was trodden down in the gates

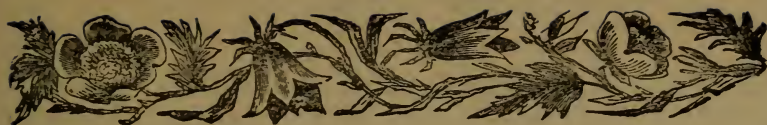
of Samaria, because he would not believe the promise of God concerning the relief from famine.*

Or we may feel no interest in this whole subject and Christ may have died in vain. But whatever the reason may be, be ye sure of this, The Lamb of God has been slain. Heaven is offered to you freely, purchased, however, by the sacrifice of him who is the light and joy of Heaven.

The greatest thing which the universe ever saw was your redemption. And now is Christ on the right hand of power, from whence he will come to judge the world. O, if you neglect so great salvation, it will be good for you had you never been born. But if you are willing to be saved, come in the right way. Renounce yourself and your works, and take Christ and his righteousness, and be not faithless but believing. Trembling sinner, Jehovah himself is your righteousness. Only believe. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

* 2 Kings 7: 2, 17-20.





FEBRUARY.

THIRD SABBATH AFTERNOON.



PETER PRAYED OUT OF PRISON.

“Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.”

ACTS 12: 5:

IT would seem difficult, if not impossible, to account for the failure of truth to bring one and another to Christ, without supposing that some supernatural agency frustrates these efforts. Willingness to hear, candid admission of the truth, the use of outward means, secret prayer, and everything else that is hopeful would lead you to expect the speedy acceptance of the gospel by many. Yet no impression is made upon them, leading them to repentance and faith in Christ. The agency of a powerful wicked spirit, the foe of God and man, is manifest in the pages of the Bible. “The god of

this world hath blended the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ who is the image of God, should shine unto them." 2Cor. 4: 4.*

He of course selects with care the objects of his special arts. This object is to prevent good as well as to do harm. He specially charges his agents of mischief to hinder the conversion of one who would do great good in the world. The mere circumstance of the conversion of some young person would exert great influence. A large class, a whole school would feel the shock. While in sin he is like a pillar, which if taken away would cause the downfall of one of Satan's strongholds, in a circle of young people. Busy, like one who has vast interests at stake, Satan or his subalterns must prevent that young person from being converted. Let that gifted, zealous Roman Catholic be converted, and another Luther on a small scale would rise up and batter down the walls of the man of sin. On no account must that soul be allowed to desert. If that wit whose sayings excite laughter in room after room of a large establishment, should become a praying man, one third, at least, of his fellow workmen, would probably follow Christ. Crafty devices are used to keep him from following Christ. The love of Christ once enkindled in the heart of that liberal, wealthy man will cause

* See also 1 Peter, 5:8; Ephesians 2:1, 2, etc.

him to devise liberal things. There would be a handful of corn from his hands in the top of one mountain after another, the fruit whereof would shake like Lebanon. Were that intelligent mother to become a praying woman, her only and promising son would be consecrated to Christ, and who can measure the good he might accomplish, and the happiness of that mother in Heaven? A professional man or a father of a large family, an editor, or a collegian, or a most estimable merchant; and then, at the other pole of society, a powerful woman in some degraded neighborhood, — if she or all of these, with whom, severally, Christian efforts have been used, should be converted, Peter's release from his prison were hardly more important to those immediately concerned.

Is there no way in which we can foil Satan and effect the deliverance of his captives, the opening of the prison doors to them that are bound? Peter's deliverance affords an answer to this question.

It is a good picture which the masters of painting have given us, — the Roman soldiers stretched in slumber, their helmets lying by, their short swords in their sheaths at their sides, a dim lamp disclosing their brawny faces, and between them the large head always recognized in pictures as that of Simon Peter. Sleep had laid a chain over them all, stronger even than the two chains which went each from the apostle's arm to the arm of a

soldier. How much alike the three appear. They breathe alike, alike they dream, and to none of the three does it matter anything, for the time, whether their bed be a prison floor or goat's hair. But to the eye of God and ministering angels the difference between one of these men and the other two is infinite. The hour draws nigh when that divine appreciation is to be made known.

So it is with some future heir of grace. God loves him as really as he loved Peter, though he is now dead in trespasses and sins. And such were some of you. "And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." God who is rich in mercy for the great love wherewith He hath loved him, will quicken that soul together with Christ, that in the ages to come He may show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward him through Christ Jesus.

When the appointed angel drew near unseen into Herod's prison, and stood and looked at the sleeping group, and waited for the moment when he should disclose his heavenly light, his love for Peter was no greater than he now feels towards one who is soon to be redeemed from Satan's chains and future prison. Bring music and prepare a song; let the morning stars sing together, and all the sons of God shout for joy. A soul is to be born again.

While in the closing verse of the first chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, it is implied that angels

minister to all who are to inherit Heaven, we can not doubt that ministering angels also perform services in Christ's name for those who shall hereafter believe on him to life everlasting. Paul was converted for such.* They keep them from death. This is the reason why some were not cut off in their sins, when others perished; why they were kept in temptation, were insensible under fierce assaults of solicitation; why they did not go to a certain place at a certain time, or why they strangely missed a call. In Heaven they will see how the good hand of God was over their transgressions, and how he gave angels charge over them to keep them in all their ways, and how they bore them up in their hands lest at any time they should dash their foot against a stone.

Indulge yourselves, O future heirs of grace, in thinking what you will do when you are converted! By what acts of love and gratitude you will show your sense of God's infinite and undeserved mercy to your soul! Consider whom you will seek to save, to whom you will go and renew broken friendships, make acknowledgements, repair the evil done by bad example, and thus be at peace and love with all, so that in your relations to others, instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier, the myrtle tree. O happy souls, who are soon to find yourselves in a new world of love, and joy, and peace.

* 1 Timothy, 1: 16.

Now they are the prisoners of Satan, asleep, bound with chains, and the keepers before the door keep the prison. They think themselves free; go where they please, do what they will; enjoy the world, rejoice in their liberty. But they are dreaming. It is not so. They are fast asleep, and are talking in their sleep. But to be dreaming in a prison, to be talking in one's sleep of happiness, when chains are on us and guards are about us, is sad to a spectator. They are under condemnation. This night may be their last, as Herod, we are told, meant that that night should be Peter's last. Rescue seems hopeless. Oh, what power on earth can make them Christians? There is none, absolutely none. All means have been tried and failed.

There is a chamber where a human form is bending low in prayer with covered face, and there may be heard strong cryings with tears. Your name, unconverted friend, is mixed with them. There is another place where a little company of *such* persons is met together; this name and others are mentioned, and they fall upon their knees in supplication. "Before they call," says God, "I will answer, and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." Oh love the Lord, ye his saints, for there is no want to them that fear him.

Historians tell us that seven cities contended for the honor of being the birthplace of Homer, and which place had the best of the argument. But

this is of no interest in Heaven compared with the question where that church prayer-meeting was held, which prayed Peter out of prison. Luke, in writing the Acts, is very particular to identify the house. It was at the house of Mary, the mother of John, whose surname was Mark. Now there were many Marys.

“ Beautiful name! “for she to whom it first was given,
Was half of earth and half of Heaven.”

But it is not every mother by that name who has a John, and of those Johns it would be rare to find in a place, more than one who was surnamed Mark. So that the place of the prayer meeting is fixed, the place where this miracle of prayer was wrought out.

When angels undertake anything, how well they do it. Those angels who officiated at the resurrection of Jesus, how well they moved that great stone, and how carefully they wrapped up the grave-clothes; and the napkin that was about the head they laid not with the linen clothes, but they wrapped it together in a place by itself. That gave the finishing stroke to John's unbelief, at the sepulchre. Thieves, thought he, have not been here. They would have flung the napkin anywhere. It required an angel to fold or wrap that napkin. Likewise in this prison scene * “ The Angel of the Lord . . . smote Peter on the side and raised

* Verses 7 and 8.

him up, saying, Arise up quickly." Down fell the chains on the prison floor, but he hath stopped their ears, like the wicked, that they cannot hear. The angel is in no haste. He waits for Peter to dress himself. It took some time for him to fix his girdle; then to tie his sandals, then to cast his garment about him, the angel standing by the while to see him deliberately dressing himself. The most wonderful and beautiful thing was that last outer gate which opened to them of his own accord. Luke is a wonderful writer. This is not a poem but prose, and yet here is a poetic creation and touch. The iron gate opened to them of his own accord. Iron gates are instinct with life where angels go.

From Satan's prison house on earth to a prayer-meeting, there is a very short way, as you will learn when you get your release.

Victory! Victory! Peter is prayed out of prison. Behold, my friends, as in a glass, yourselves relieved from chains and death. It is no parable. Some of you are to be converted, and very soon. For something has smitten one and another on the side. You are awakened. Now notice the beautiful doctrine of free agency, how it plays in like a vein in marble, or like a part in music, everywhere in the Word of God. The Saviour knocking at the door says, "If any man will open the door;" the man opens the door. There is something for the sinner to do in conversion. So now the angel

makes Peter dress himself. Peter did not say, If I am elected I will escape, girdle, sandals, garment or not. No. You are a free agent. How the unbelieving world wish for the angel to fix his girdle for him, and tie his sandals and put on him his outer garment. God does honor to our manhood ; he exercises our powers in conversion ; we are not to be saved as babes are saved from a fire ; we are to be serviceable to God, yielding our natures as instruments of righteousness unto God, as those that are alive from the dead.* Follow me, says the angel to Peter, and Peter had no metaphysical questions to ask, as how spirits can pass through stone walls, or whether they have a magnetic power over iron. If you are smitten, any of you, on your side, rise up and go, and have the liberty of the sons of God.

There will be no small stir in Satan's prison-house when some of you are converted. He meets with great losses and afflictions of late. Those two soldiers were petrified with fear when they woke. How they cast their eyes around and above. No girdle, no sandals, no garment, no Peter. Out they go to the keepers, and the keepers did not know but that Peter was safe in jail, and all of them laid their heads on the block, and never knew in this world why they were punished. Oh, the mysteries of redeeming mercy. There is

* Romans 6: 13.

not a Christian here whose deliverance is not as wonderful as Peter's deliverance. God, and Christ, and the Holy Spirit, and praying people all had a part in your salvation.

There is no religion in praying at people ; nor is it well except in the most private and tender manner to tell them that you pray for them.

I have known meetings composed of those who have one or more unconverted friends, whose conversion they earnestly desired, — each one who attended bringing a name or names which he read to the little company ; not one spectator present, no one who did not bring in his heart the burden of one or more souls, the object of the meeting being as specific as that of a prayer meeting which prayed Peter out of prison. What preparations of heart are needed in those who attend such a meeting. First settling it with God that they had used proper efforts. God does no man's work for him. I wish there were more two and two praying souls. But Christ has given us the idea, work for him.* Do not tell me that relates to miracles. Two imperfect human beings, apostles or not, agree to ask God for a thing, no matter what, or where, or under what circumstances, it being consistent, of course, with reason and ordinary propriety, and it is done for them. That is enough. God hearkens to the voice of united prayer. O for faith to make trial

* Matthew 18: 19.

of this promise. It would be well if by two and two, Christians would thus agree. There are some temptations and hindrances in a social meeting which two praying souls do not encounter. That prayer meeting for Peter was melted down into something like two congenial souls, that is, with just enough of the social element to give excitement, while the intenseness of desire gives it unity. How they must have prayed. Prayer meetings seem to have had strange effects on prisons in those days. Paul and Silas held one in prison, and there came an earthquake and shook it, and every man's chains were unloosed. Peter's friends prayed and there was an earthquake. Oh, these earthquake prayer meetings! when we feel so deeply that there is more prayer than speaking, more laboring with God than with man. Lord, teach us to pray.

Who of you is next to be converted, or whose friend? God knows. It is you, perhaps, whom this narrative of Peter's release has kindly smitten, and will cause to arise up quickly. Follow the secret impulses of your hearts, and chains, and guards, and walls, and gates will recede from you, and you will wist not what is done unto you. The angel departed forthwith from Peter, and left him to his free agency. Let each unconverted one pray, "Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name." Oh awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead and Christ shall give thee life.



FEBRUARY.

FOURTH SABBATH MORNING.



THE INHABITANTS OF HEAVEN.

“—The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it.”

REVELATION 22: 3.

HEAVEN and Redemption are, in these words and in all the Scriptures, most intimately associated. All the representations which we have of Heaven make the impression that it is characterized by redemption. There is a place in the universe which is distinguished from all other places as the peculiar dwelling-place of God. The place of the throne is the monarch's peculiar place, and this identification of the monarch with his throne is used in the Bible to express the place of God's peculiar presence. It might be that the omnipresence of God forbids the supposition that there is any place which is peculiarly the place of

his presence. But the very omnipresence of God would seem to make it necessary that there should be one place where God is peculiarly manifest. We are not to suppose that God is a mere atmosphere universally diffused, without any personal manifestation ; for finite creatures then could have no satisfaction in beholding him. Then our hopes and expectation of seeing God would be disappointed. We are taught that one point of difference between earth and Heaven will be that, whereas on earth we walk by faith and not by sight, in Heaven God will dwell with us and be our God, and we shall see his face. It is safe to assert that every one, in thinking of Heaven, thinks of it as the place where God, in a peculiar manner manifests himself, and where angels and the spirits of just men behold him in light which no man can approach unto and live. When Jeremiah Evarts was dying, he exclaimed, " Oh, the face of God ! "

This in part, is doubtless meant when it is said that the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, — that is, a peculiar, personal manifestation of God. It follows that inasmuch as the redeemed are to dwell in Heaven, they will be in that place where the throne of God stands, the place where God chooses to reveal his presence, and as the context expresses it where they shall see his face."

There is reason to believe that angels and redeemed men will constitute the only inhabitants of Heaven.

Angels seem to be natives of the place ; but

even they are represented as being a part of the preparation of that world, with a view to another order of beings who are the objects of its design. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" The angels are God's ministers of providence and grace. No other order of beings except angels is represented in the Scriptures as inheriting that world of glory except redeemed men. There are many passages which speak of angels and men as the inhabitants of Heaven, a few of which will suggest others.

The Apostle says in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "Ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, . . . and to an innumerable company of angels, and to the spirits of just men made perfect." These are the only created beings spoken of as inhabiting the Heavenly world.

In the Revelation we never hear of any other order of beings as belonging to the heavenly world, except angels and men. John saw a multitude which no man could number, out of every nation, and kingdom, and tongue, and people. He also beheld and lo, the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands. In such descriptions of Heaven it seems probable that if there were other inhabitants there, we should have had some account of their sym-
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thy and union with the scenes which are represented as transpiring there.

It is the general supposition that other worlds besides this earth are inhabited. There seems to be no reason why of all the planets revolving round a common centre one only, and that an inferior one should be made to be occupied. When we see several houses in a street resembling each other, though differing in size and splendor, no one suspects that one is habitable and made to be inhabited, and the rest are not so. It seems natural to suppose that the same wise and benevolent God who has peopled this earth with intelligent creatures, and also with forms of skill and beauty in the irrational creatures, imparting the pleasures of existence to countless myriads of organic things, has permitted the overflowings of his benevolence to fill other worlds with living beings; and thus that the universe is full of intelligent creatures, distributed among the uncounted worlds which astronomy has either revealed, or has led us to believe exist beyond the reach of science. "Is there any number of his armies? and upon whom doth not his light arise?" If so, can it be that none of these innumerable orders of beings inhabit the heavenly world, the metropolis of this vast creation, the Monarch's seat, the place of the throne of the universe, except angels and men? If so, can any reason be assigned for it?

One thing will strike every one as just and true.

There is an obvious reason why some other place of residence than this world should be provided for redeemed men. We are assured by revelation that these heavens and this earth are "reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. . . . The heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. . . . The earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."

In preparation for this catastrophe, "the souls of believers are, at their death, made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory; and their bodies being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection." At the last day their bodies will be raised incorruptible, and the living saints will undergo a corporeal change. Before the destruction of the world begins, they will together be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and so will they ever be with the Lord. Now where will they be! Three answers are possible: — Taken to the renovated earth, to some other planet, or to Heaven. Instead of being returned to earth, or transferred to some other planet, the Bible makes the impression that they will be received into the immediate presence of God, whither the souls of all the pious dead have, with Jesus the forerunner, already entered.

One obvious reason why the inhabitants of no other planet are found in Heaven, may be their places of residence are not under the curse of sin,

or doomed to destruction. The earthly house of their tabernacle not being dissolved, they need no other building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, than those which they now occupy. If they now retain, as there is reason to suppose, their allegiance to God, God no doubt dwells among them, as he did with our first parents in the Garden of Eden. Whether they have the power or permission to visit the place where God's throne is revealed, of course we cannot tell, though we may suppose it probable. Happy in their unfallen state, they love and serve God amid wonderful and glorious works. But here is a fallen race. A part of this race is to be saved. And to these redeemed men is assigned the privilege of dwelling in the immediate presence of God.

This is a subject for profound astonishment, and a theme for meditation. The natural feeling is, It cannot be so. "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, . . . what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" Here is a planet which is one of the smallest in our planetary system. Why of all the worlds should earth be thus distinguished? Why of all races of creatures should man be exalted near the throne of the universe?

Instead of answering this question, I would open still greater mysteries of it; but yet that very mystery will serve to confirm our faith in what has

now been said. Why, of all the orders of created beings, should man be distinguished by the act of redemption? Now there is nothing so wonderful in the exclusive admission of man to Heaven as there is in one undoubted truth, which is without controversy great, namely: God was manifest in the flesh. Man has exerted an influence upon the throne of God itself; man may be said to have made Heaven what it is; for the throne of Heaven is called the throne of God and of the Lamb. The Lamb is the Redeemer of men. The Lamb is Jesus of Nazareth, the friend of James and John, of Lazarus and his sisters; your friend and Saviour. He is on the throne of Heaven. Why should we wonder that man should be admitted to the Heaven of heavens, if Jesus lives and reigns on the throne of the universe? It seems that human nature is capable of this close alliance with the Godhead; shall we, then, despise our nature? It has properties, it has a capacity, by which God can dwell in personal union with it, as the infinite Word, who is God, does in the person of the man Christ Jesus. Redeemed men are admitted to the Heaven of heavens because the throne of the universe which is there is the throne of God and of the Lamb.

I have not advanced anything which you will not say is obviously true and familiar. None of us, perhaps, ever supposed that there were other inhabitants in Heaven besides angels and redeemed

sinners. The Bible certainly intimates nothing which would lead us to infer that there are any other orders of beings there. But though this is an obvious and simple truth, it will be seen that it is rich in interest and instruction.

I. It is perfectly in accord with the spirit of the Gospel in the teachings of Christ, for example, the parables of the lost sheep, the lost piece of money, and the prodigal son.

II. If angels and redeemed men alone inhabit the Heaven of heavens with God, I remark, God has bestowed great honor upon our nature.

We have as yet no adequate conceptions of the future dignity of man as a redeemed sinner. We look at ourselves, allied by a fleshly nature to the lower orders of creation, with corruptible bodies debased by the fall. We think of ourselves as sinners, polluted, odious: the thought of honor or dignity in connection with such natures seems preposterous. But we are the offspring of God, body and soul. "In the image of God created He him." And though marred by the fall, these natures can and will be renewed by God. Our bodies he will consign to the earth to sleep there for thousands of years, and mix with the dust as they were, so that when they are raised again there will be all the difference between them and our present bodies which there is between a corrupt kernel of grain and a new shock of corn. There will be a corresponding change in our spirits. Created anew by

the Holy Spirit in the image of God, they will at death be made perfectly holy, and we shall be as fully prepared to commune with God face to face as angels are.

Redemption shows the estimate which God has of our nature. A man does not ordinarily redeem a thing at a great price. When we see a piece of raw material, whether it be ore or precious wood, or a tusk of ivory, and are astonished at the price paid for it, we are sure that the purchaser expects to make something costly and precious out of it. We were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ; and he who became our ransom, is now on the throne of Heaven, which is called the throne of God and the Lamb. Our nature has its representation in the person of the Saviour on the throne of Heaven. Then, of course, our nature is infinitely capable of exaltation. It is such that the Godhead can be personally joined with it, not merely as God is manifested in a tree or in a star, but the Word was God and the Word was made flesh. If our nature can be coupled with the Godhead, of course each of us is capable of unlimited progress in excellence, and the apostle might well say, with rapturous faith and joy, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be."

Of all the creatures of God, not natives of Heaven, we are to enjoy the destination, if saved,

of being exalted to the Heaven of heavens as our future dwelling-place. With those noble spirits, the unfallen sons of light, we are to associate, and compose a society, the society of Heaven.

Many passages of Scripture will readily occur to your minds, whose meaning will appear in a strong light in connection with this subject. For example, "That ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us — ward who believe." Christ says, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." God says in Isaiah, "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honorable, and I have loved thee." Consider also these passages: "And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father." "And they shall reign forever and ever." "If children then heirs: heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." Such words convey strong intimations that we are destined to great exaltation and glory of redeemed men." "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

It would seem that God intends to use the fall and the redemption of men to illustrate his nature and character to the universe, and for this purpose he has taken our nature into union with the Divine

Word, and will bring the redeemed up to his Heaven of heavens, and Christ will bind his people to himself as his ornaments, as a bride doeth. Before the universe as they look to the Heaven of heavens, there will appear a multitude which no man can number, redeemed from among men to show what sin is, and what the mercy of God is, and how God can be just and justify them that believe in Jesus, and how God can love, yea, what an ocean is the love of God, without a bottom or a shore. There will be an interest in the redeemed far passing that which belongs to angels. The Lamb is more intimately related to them than to angels. "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham." Angels are like the elder son; but man is the young prodigal, and when the young prodigal came home he made more music and dancing than the elder son probably occasioned all his lifetime. So there is more joy in heaven over the sinner man, than over the angelic ninety and nine who need no repentance.

There on the throne is God and the Lamb, forever keeping up the recollection of the work of human redemption, and governing the moral universe as God and the Lamb by the influence derived from that stupendous work. Joined with that work and ourselves a part of its history, we from every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, are to be the objects of principal love and

honor in Heaven, the adopted heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.

It is not all of our race, nor all in Christian lands, nor all in any Christian congregation, nor necessarily all in any one Christian family who have any presumptive claim. There is a certain number of our race who will attain to it, the rest will refuse it; not be shut out by any decree, but refuse it; for God "will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." He is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." But many prefer present pleasure to attaining to the peerage of the universe. They mind earthly things, and have no aspiration to be kings and priests unto God.

When we consider the population of the universe, the redeemed although in themselves a multitude which no man can number, yet comparatively are not many. Should the redeemed be employed to visit other worlds now created and to be created, — for is creation finished? — not many could be apportioned to one world. So that the redeemed, in the view of the universe, and its uncounted population will be a select few; gathered from a fallen race, far exceeding perhaps that race who shall be lost, yet compared with all the inhabitants of all these stars, a few, the peers of the realm, the lords, the earls, the dukes, the baronets, the viscounts, an aristocracy of divine love and honor. To these, one of the angels referred when

he said to John, "Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife."

When I think of this, I want to be saved; I must go to heaven; I see why Paul said, "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead."

This subject imparts to us comfort as to our departed Christian friends.

Where are they? Affection and hope ask, Where are they? They are not scattered far and wide in the universe, some in one planet, and others in another, but they have gone to the Heaven of heavens. They have departed to be with Christ. They are admitted to that vast company of the redeemed who with angels compose the society of Heaven. They behold the face of God in righteousness; they are satisfied, for they have awaked in his likeness. And how shall it be with us? Soon we, like them, must cease from all things which are done under the sun. Have we a good hope that we shall go to be with them? What else is there to live for but this, to prepare ourselves and others for the Heaven of heavens?

It must be inconceivably dreadful to be lost.

To be lost is not merely to be shut up in hell; it is to lose Heaven. No spirit there is happier or more welcome than we should be; we can secure it as well as others. Nothing but our unwillingness to do that which is necessary to secure it will keep us out of Heaven. We shall have a whole

eternity in which to reflect on what we have lost. We might have dwelt by the very throne of God: we might have been among those who are to illustrate to the universe forever the manifold wisdom of God. Instead of this — to go from such a world as this earth, distinguished by the incarnation of God the Son, and by redemption; to go from this favored earth and lie down in sorrow with fallen angels — who can endure the thought? Who will not say, If I do nothing else all my life, but strive to be a Christian, I will be one. I am resolved not to lose this infinite glory and joy of which you speak.

It is our deep conviction, impressed upon us by the study of the Scriptures and the ministry of the gospel, that exceeding glory and joy are prepared for redeemed men far above other beings in the universe, unless others like us should fall, and be redeemed. Could I, your fellow-servant for Jesus' sake, express the unutterable emotions of my heart in one word, I should say to each, that and only that which I once heard a man say to his infant child. He was a young Christian father, and lay a dying. I baptized his infant son in the sick room a short time before the father breathed his last. When I had finished, he took the boy from my arms and kissed him, and then holding him up he said to him, "Oh my son, be a Christian; my son, be a Christian." I can say no more to each of you, beloved hearers, than this: Be a Christian.

A prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus is set before you. You may fail to secure it. Oh, if you should! what would you say to me, and what could I say to you at the final bar? Be a Christian! Professed Christian, be a Christian. Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called. Almost have one and another of you been persuaded, at different times, to be a Christian. Let me persuade you to-day. Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord, refresh my soul in the Lord. Not me;—let the dear redeemed friend and child, the society of Heaven, the Saviour himself have joy of thee, returning at last from your wanderings to-day. Think of Heaven made for you and angels, ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation. You are in danger of losing Heaven. You will lose it if you are not converted. If you would spend eternity before the throne of God and the Lamb, you must establish that throne in your heart. Behold upon it now the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.



FEBRUARY

FOURTH SABBATH AFTERNOON.

THE JOY OF THY LORD.

—“Therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.” — HEBREWS 1: 9.

IN his joy as in everything, Jesus Christ is the head of all principality and power. My subject is, The Joy of Christ.

What are the Occasions and Sources of the Saviour's Joy? ”

The happiness of Christ is owing,

I. To his personal union with the Godhead.

It is worth a great deal to have a clear, intelligible conception of the one person and two natures of the Lord Jesus Christ. Many are confused in their thoughts upon this subject. Some think that

Christ is only a human body inhabited by the Deity. Therefore they are at a loss how to explain many passages in which he speaks of his dependence on God, and in which human qualities and actions are ascribed to him.

“Who is the Redeemer of God’s Elect?” “The only Redeemer of God’s elect is the Lord Jesus Christ, who being the eternal Son of God, became man, and so was and continued to be God and man, in two distinct natures and one person forever.”

Human nature consists of a human body and a human soul. These Christ possesses: “A true body and a reasonable soul.” He is a man in all respects except sin. He is not, therefore, a human body without a finite human mind; but with a human mind in a human body. He is properly called “the man Christ Jesus,” as really a man as was John the Baptist, or the apostle Paul.

Between the man Christ Jesus, at his birth, and one of the three persons of the Godhead there began a personal union. Hence, as it is properly said, “All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made.” Then we read, “And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.” Thus we have in Christ the everlasting Deity in one of its mysterious distinctions, which no man hath seen nor can see, joined with perfect man. Of him as man we now speak; his human nature, his manhood joined with

the Deity in his one person is in possession of the most exalted joy in the creation of God.

You have only to think what would be your condition were you a sinless being, and you and the Deity should thus be joined, and you be conscious of that union. Some will say, This has the appearance of irreverence. I answer, No, not if Christ be as we hold, God and man; for he was once an infant, and if the Second Person were joined with a sinless infant, in his case it is not irreverent to speak of it. Rather it would be a device of our enemy to keep it away. We are to suppose, of course, that Christ has thoughts and feelings which belong to him as man: there are two minds in his person; he is conscious of being a man; he is conscious of being God; how these two consciousnesses exist together without confusion, or consistently with the unity of the one person Jesus Christ, we may perhaps decide when we can tell how the soul in us moves the body of flesh and blood; this we cannot understand, nor can we know that concerning which the apostle says, "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."* The Saviour says, "No man knoweth who the Son is but the Father; and

* 1 Timothy, 3:16.

who the Father is but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him.”* Here is a wonderful declaration of the Deity of Christ. Can no man understand Christ but God. A poet says,

“A God alone can comprehend a God.”

But it seems that the Son alone can comprehend God who dwells in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see.

The babe of Bethlehem, the man of Nazareth, the friend of publicans and sinners, the intimate friend of Mary, and Martha, and their brother Lazarus, the man who was asleep in the hinderpart of ship in a storm, the man who sat on a well and said to a woman who came there to draw, Give me to drink; the man who went into Gethsemane to pray, and was there in an agony and needed to be strengthened by an angel; this servant of God, the apostle and High Priest of our profession, and Jesus in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the God-head bodily, has passed through his humiliation and is now on the throne of the universe.

We contemplate him there. We say that his joy surpasses that of all the creatures of God, of every name that is named of things in earth and things in Heaven. This joy is derived principally from union of the Divine Word in his person.

* Luke 10: 22.

We read of his exaltation. This refers, of course, to his human nature. It was exalted above all men and angels. Standing on Mt. Olivet, he says to the eleven, "All power is given unto me in Heaven and in earth." What a word is that! All power in Heaven? We consent to "in earth;" thinking that he may have meant, as vicegerent. In Heaven? Yes: "Let all the angels of God worship him." "Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name. That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."* "But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?" "Are they not all ministering spirits?" † "And he hath on his vesture, and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." ‡ He receives in Heaven the same ascriptions which are paid to the Deity. "Blessing and honor and glory and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." Now while we cannot enter into the mys-

* Philippians 2: 8-11.

† Hebrews 1: 13, 14. ‡ Revelation 19: 16.

teries of that union and communion which subsist between the human and the divine nature of Christ, we know that his human nature must be fully conscious of it. What can any one imagine would be his feelings to find himself thus joined to the Godhead, on the throne of the universe, receiving the worship of all creation, swaying the sceptre of universal empire, in earth and in Heaven, and wherever the various races of intelligent beings are found? For the Word made them, and the Word dwells in the person of the man Christ Jesus, and therefore the man Christ Jesus has become, in connection with the divine Word, the vicegerent of the universe. Were we to dwell on this truth, ages could not exhaust it. These are the unsearchable riches of Christ.

I will only repeat these words addressed by the Father to the Son, remembering that the Son is man as well as God: "But unto the Son, he saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment. And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail."* All, therefore, which the Godhead can impart to the human

* Hebrews 1:8-12.

nature of Christ, that nature constantly enjoys. It is interesting to suppose that the human nature of Christ, like the nature of saints in Heaven, will forever increase and be capable of still greater communications from the Godhead.

The joy of Christ is not derived wholly from his union with the Godhead.

II. The joy of Christ is derived also from the recollections of his life on earth.

The reason here assigned for his being anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows, is this: "Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity." How did he manifest it? By being "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners."

No one ever had such temptations addressed to his virtue as he. We think that our temptations are strong, and perhaps that we are excusable if we fall under a powerful temptation. But he was tempted forty days and forty nights in succession by the great tempter, who employed all his arts, and experience, and perseverance to ruin him. He withstood those temptations, for the reason that he loved righteousness and hated iniquity.

But he showed this chiefly by what he did to sustain and promote righteousness, and to destroy iniquity. A comment on this declaration of the text is found in the whole of his public life, from the time that he began both to do and to teach. Never did he connive at sin; never did he flatter

the sinner ; never did he keep silence when opportunity presented itself to rebuke transgression. His words were sometimes like thunderbolts, scorching and blasting the spirits of the incorrigibly wicked : “ Ye serpents, ye generations of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell. Fill ye up then, the measure of your fathers.” * “ Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. Woe unto thee, Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee.”

Not only did he hate iniquity ; for some do this from mere feeling of opposition to others and mere malignity, and because they must have something to hate, as certain wild beasts seek something on which to sharpen their tusks. It is not enough, therefore, professedly to hate iniquity. Christ loved righteousness, righteousness as applied to the very thoughts and intents of the heart. In his sermon on the mount and elsewhere, he makes no compromise with sin, but extends the law of God to the secret feeling and even to the look of the eye, himself being a perfect exemplification of that beatitude, “ Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” All his instruction from beginning to end was of the purest morality, with the highest standard ; so that its influence on the individual character, wherever it has power, is of a purifying nature, and its effect on communi-

* Matthew 23 : 32, 33.

ties where it has free course is to raise them in the scale of moral excellence, however degraded and barbarous they may have been.

The love which Christ had for righteousness is most conspicuously illustrated in his character and works as Redeemer. He so loved holiness and justice that rather than sinners should be found without a perfect satisfaction made to the law of God, he gave his life as a satisfaction to Divine justice. Being appointed of God to suffer and make atonement for sin, he did not shrink from it, but endured the accursed death of the tree after a life of humiliation and shame. With untold and unknown agonies he laid down his life in support of righteousness; that God might be just in being the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. Hence it is said, in consequence of his tasting death for every man, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." *

III. The joy of Christ is also derived from his experience of great suffering.

The thought of suffering in a good cause, when crowned with success, sweetens victory and en-

* Philippians 2: 9-11.

hances the joys of recollection. 'The hope of this is represented as one great motive which Christ had in the midst of his labors and sufferings: "Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." * It will be with the Saviour a source of everlasting pleasure to think of all that he endured on earth in fulfilment of the purpose for which he was born. He will think of his poverty in contrast with his possessing the riches of Heaven and of the universe; he will be glad that while foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, the Son of man had not where to lay his head. As he sees all angels and saints casting their crowns at his feet, he recollects how he was once led by furious enemies to the brow of a hill on which their city was built, that they might thrust him down headlong. When he has seen helmed cherubim and sworded seraphim approach him, he has thought oftentimes of that night when men came with torches and staves, as against a thief, to take him. When Satan is bound and his cause ruined, and the man Christ Jesus is perfectly victorious over him, he will remember his temptation in the wilderness, his frequent conflicts with the devil through his whole life, and his sufferings from the malice of wicked men stirred up by that infernal enemy. Once, on the eve of his betrayal and condemnation, he said to his ene-

* Hebrews 12: 2.

mies, "This is *your* hour and the power of darkness." They triumphed over him; they slew him and hanged him on a tree. They that passed by wagged their heads, and said, "Ah, thou that destroyest the temple and buildest it in three days, save thyself." Meekly, patiently, in silence he endured the contradiction of sinners against himself; he drank the cup of affliction to the last drop; he poured out his soul unto death, and such a death as no man ever knew.

Now he remembers Gethsemane, and that Judgment Hall, and that hill Calvary, and all their scenes,—O with what emotions, as he reigns. The captain of our salvation was made perfect in his joy as well as in other respects, through sufferings.

IV. And in the last place, The joy of Christ is derived also from seeing the fruit of his sufferings in the redeemed.

Isaiah simply said, "He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied." God says, "Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." * Now all this is fulfilled to him. We can only look upon the outward scenes and occasions of his joy, the thunder of their

* Isaiah 53: 11, 12.

power, who can understand? John in vision saw the whole multitude of the redeemed assembled out of every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, and they said before their Redeemer, "Thou art worthy for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." Christ sees the first parents of our race bow before him, and ascribe their recovery from the fall to his sufferings and death four thousand years afterward, believing on him in the garden of Eden, as the seed of the woman who should bruise the serpent's head. Enoch who walked with God, does homage to him. Noah speaks of his ark as the emblem of Jesus, the ark of his salvation. Abraham, the father of the faithful, and Melchisedek worship at his feet. Moses lays down his honors as the great leader of Israel, at the feet of him who redeemed Israel and the Christian church. Great Aaron! Where now are those onyx stones which gleamed on thy shoulder in the dim light of the Holy of Holies? Isaiah is there, and Daniel. There stand the apostles; Paul counts all things but loss for the excellency of the glory of Christ Jesus his Lord. The noble army of martyrs adore him, having washed their robes and made them white, not in their blood but his. In every soul that comes to worship before him, Jesus sees and feels new and different emotions, suggested by the individual circumstances of each.

If you, dear hearer, shall bow before him in

Heaven, and bless him for his love to you, it will awaken in him the remembrance of your history, different from that of every other being, and will give him a separate joy. Then we may imagine what that eternity of joy which the Saviour will have, must be, as he sees and knows and loves every one of the redeemed, — for there will not be a soul in Heaven to whom he will not stand in the relation of Redeemer, not one, from Adam to each of those myriads of infant souls ; — each will know and worship him as his Redeemer. What an eternity of joy must his be. They will forever feel their obligations to him ; it will come over them as it sometimes does over your mind, What is it to live forever and ever ? where is the end of eternity ; forever and ever ; it makes the mind swoon as you try to think of it ; this interminable existence, what would it have been in hell ? Christ saved me from spending it in hell. Then as their powers and faculties increase, and their susceptibilities to happiness, and new joys forever flow in upon them, they will never cease to say, All this we owe to Christ ! My hearers, then what must be the future, eternal joy of the man Christ Jesus ! “ God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.”

I wish to use this subject to illustrate a few important truths.

1. The happiness of Christ shows us the capacity of our nature.

The thought never can cease to be a cause of wonder and joy. My nature is capable of being joined to the Godhead. Now we see in this what it must be to be redeemed and saved, and what it must be to be lost. Your nature is capable of infinite glory and joy. It is of course capable of the opposite extreme of suffering. It seems sometimes that we would do or suffer anything if we could only make men feel this; namely, What it will be for them to be saved, and what it will be for them to be lost. Oh, if you should perish, if with this great nature of yours, which in Christ is joined to the Godhead and can, so to speak, *hold* such joys as Christ must have; if you with such a soul should spend eternity in sin and misery, what will you do and what will you say? Look at the man Christ Jesus, and think what happiness he enjoys, and then think, He is a man like me, except sin; if his nature can contain so much, so can mine; and what should it profit me to gain the whole world and lose my own soul? We look on those who have an interest in Christ with great joy to think that you are to know by blissful experience the vast, the boundless capacities of your godlike nature. "Hold that fast," then, "which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

What an expression, "Joint heirs with Christ." Yes, beloved Christians, we are to share with Christ

his joy. 'When his glory shall be revealed ye shall be glad also with exceeding joy.' Thus the Saviour prayed for you. "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me." But we shall also hear him say, "Well done, good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord." Eminent service for him will be rewarded with proportionable bestowments of joy from Christ.

2. We are instructed by this subject how we may now increase our future happiness in Heaven.

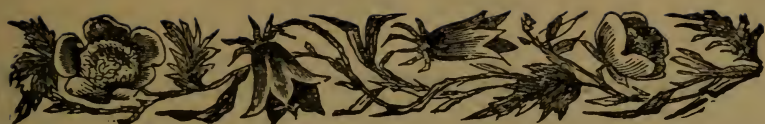
What constitutes the happiness of our Saviour there? for he is our example in everything, even in heavenly joy. We have seen that his happiness is derived from his union with the Godhead. It follows that the more we, in our measure and according to our ability, are in spiritual union with God, and the more his image is in us, and the more we walk with him, the more we shall be capable of enjoying. For "this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." Neither science nor literature; not great talents of themselves can make us happy in Heaven, but to know and love God; in that proportion shall the powers and faculties of our minds be fitted for great enjoyment hereafter. But we have seen that Christ's happiness is also derived from the recollections of a good life. He loved righteousness and hated iniquity.

The more we do this, the more zealous we are for goodness and against evil in our hearts, as well as in the world, in the spirit of Christ, the greater will be our reward.

The sufferings of Christ also qualified him for abundant joy. "If we suffer we shall also reign with him." Then shall we feel that we had not one suffering too much; that we cannot spare one pain, one loss, one sorrow. We should make great account of our sufferings and trials here; for the faith which they excite in us will "be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. There was one thing which was essential to the Saviour's happiness in Heaven. And what was that but his usefulness, his being the Redeemer of men, his looking upon the fruits of his life? What fruits have we thus far to look upon? Have we given cups of cold water to disciples in the name of disciples? Have we reason to hope that our example, our words, will be owned by some as the means of bringing them to Heaven? Our happiness there can be vastly promoted by our usefulness here.

3. Each of us may be an occasion of eternal happiness to the Saviour. If you should be saved by him, he will behold in you forever an object of grateful recollection, you will be one of his spoils taken from Satan, and one of the ornaments of his triumph. The Saviour will love to have you for one of his redeemed people. Only reflect what it

must be to have for a friend such a being as the Lord Jesus, such a happy friend: for if Jesus Christ is so infinitely happy, it follows that happiness is to be the order of his kingdom; if his joy overflows, it will certainly overflow upon his beloved people; and if you gratify him by giving him your heart, depend upon it he will make you as happy as your nature will forever admit. "Where I am," he says, "there shall also my servant be." "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." Why will you be gloomy and miserable here while you have such a happy Saviour? Why will you refrain from loving him who is to be made infinitely happy by the ardent love of millions of millions of your fellow men? Why will you perish when he is willing to be to you all that he ever was or can be to any other soul? If one of you has any doubt that you, if saved, are to be a partaker of Christ's happiness, I will give you one word of Scripture in conclusion, which will both excite you to duty and strengthen your faith and hope. Christ says, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father in his throne."



FEBRUARY.

FIFTH SABBATH MORNING.



HOBAB'S CHOICE.

“ And Moses said unto Hobab, the son of Raguel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you : come thou with us, and we will do thee good: for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel.” — NUMBERS 10: 29.

THERE are those in every assembly who are as really on the way to Heaven as the church of Israel in the wilderness were on the way to the promised land.

We have seen Christians enter Heaven. Have we not seen them enter Heaven? We did not see, in each instance, the guardian angel with glorified friends, receive the departed spirit. Nor did we lose sight of the ecstatic company as they bore the ransomed spirit beyond suns and stars into that flaming void which no man can see and live; nor did we arrive with them at one of those twelve

gates, nor see the seraph's smile as this newly arrived spirit entered into the joy of its Lord; nor did he lay his right hand on us as we sought to go in, saying that we must return to earth, until our change come; nor did we hear the first words of welcome and the first accents of surprise and joy as the happy spirit found itself in Heaven and thought, What gain to die! We did not see and hear this, but we feel as sure that their souls are in Heaven as that they themselves died.

There are also in every congregation those who, had they departed this life, would not have afforded us reason to hope that it was well with them after death. We should have been called to sorrow as they that have no hope with regard to some who are yet without God in the world; and some who, though they profess to be Christ's, love this present evil world.

If it is anything, it is everything to be a Christian; to make your peace with God, to have an interest in the redemption by Christ, to be born again, having a new nature making you capable of spiritual tastes and pleasures, and so meet for Heaven.

Should you leave everything to day and become a homeless pilgrim, begging your way to some place in the ends of the earth to obtain pardon and salvation, it would be a cheap purchase. And if, instead of this, you get all which your ambition or your imagination have marked out for you, and

possess all those worldly joys which after all are like a snowflake upon the stream,

“A moment white, then gone forever; —”

if you gain the whole world and lose your own soul, you will find yourself poor; and God will say to you those two words which are the worst words which God can say, and which he did say to a certain man; and what were they? “And God said unto him, Thou fool.” If God calls me “a fool,” I shall lie down in sorrow and say, Reproach hath broken my heart. So is every one that layeth up treasure to himself, and is not rich toward God.

There is a heaven-wide difference, then, in every assembly,—some, when they die, entering into the immediate presence of the God and Saviour whom, having not seen, they loved, while others have no God, no Bible, no Sabbath, no Throne of grace, no church of Christ, nothing, the love of which indicates love to God, nothing of which Christ can say, Ye did it unto me. And such were some of us. But we were persuaded, through the power of the Holy Ghost, to leave the paths that lead to hell, and prepare for Heaven. So did those souls who, from among us, are now in the realms of bliss. Your case is far from hopeless: it is full of hope, and also of peril; hope because “to him that is joined to all the living, there is hope:” hope, because in sparing you while Christians die, God is

long-suffering toward you, "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

To that world into which Christian friends from the very midst of you have departed, we refer when we say, "We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you; Come thou with us, and we will do thee good, for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel. We seek to bring you unto that Israel. Come thou with us. We seek not yours but you. Come thou with us. You are not with us now, but on a diverging road near to ours, as yet, so that we can speak across, but separating every day. Come thou with us. You are in bad company. You are on that broad road which leads to death, and being impenitent you are of the number of the wicked, and every gradation of sin and guilt is on the road with you, to that world where your sinful nature, losing its outward advantages enjoyed here, will plunge you to the level with the worst of men, or, if you have talents, raise you to the bad eminence of proficient in sin. We seek to save your souls. Your souls are as precious as ours. Heaven will be all to you which it will be to us, and "who among us can dwell with the devouring fire; who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?" We fear for you when we think of the perils of life, and of the possibility that soon and suddenly you may be numbered with the dead.

We have some reasons which we desire to urge, and persuade you to repent and seek the Lord.

When Jethro, who is also called Raguel and Ruel, Moses' father-in-law, left Moses at the foot of Sinai, and returned to Midian and to the tribe of the Kenites to which he belonged, it would seem that Hobab his son, and brother-in-law to Moses, staid behind. But the time came when Hobab himself would return to his people. Moses had a strong affection for him, and said to him, "We are journeying unto the land of which the Lord said, I will give it you: come thou with us and we will do thee good, for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel."

This is an interesting and affecting sight. Here is a man leaving God's covenant people, going back to those Gentile tribes which the Lord had sworn that he would utterly destroy. He is about to leave the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, who delivered Israel out of the hand of Pharaoh, by mighty signs and wonders in the land of Egypt and in the Red Sea. The God who had sworn to Abraham that to his seed He would give that goodly land, and was able and faithful to fulfil His word. He was about to leave that people who in the long succession of pious men, Jews and Gentiles, to the end of time were to be the redeemed of the Lord. There is vast importance in the decision which that man is about to make. The stream of his destiny is now a brook, which he can

step over. If he goes back to his Gentile home, he may never see good: if he listens to Moses, casts in his lot with the people of God, there will never be a period in eternity when he will not bless God for his wise choice. We tremble to hear his reply to the invitation of Moses, lest it should prove that he knows not the time of his visitation.

The kind invitation of Moses was declined. "And Hobab said unto him, I will not go; but I will depart to mine own land and to my kindred." So it has frequently happened that our invitations have been unsuccessful. So we apprehend you will now decline our propositions for some such reasons as perhaps weighed with this Gentile in declining the best offer which had ever been made to him. Perhaps he did not like the restraints which the worship of the true God imposed. He would rather be an idolater and make gods to himself according to his own wishes. He loved the freedom and independence of his present state, the manners and customs of his Gentile friends: he knew not the God of Israel, he felt no interest in that promised land, that great High Priest who was to take away *his* sins in his own body on the tree, nor did he see Christ with an eye of faith in the Passover, and the scapegoat, and in the blood of sprinkling. And yet for him did all the types foretell a dying Redeemer; but Hobab was putting salvation away

from him, and would dwell in the tents of wickedness.

Thus men refuse the offers of eternal blessedness, and know not the time of their visitation. Indifference, or repugnance, or love of the world, or love of sin prevail with them, and if left to themselves they would surely perish.

Moses had himself once considered in his own case the proposal which he made to Hobab. That was the turning point in his life. He might have been near the throne, prince of the magi. Yet, what a decision! He "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward."

He was not the man to faint or be discouraged at this refusal from Hobab. His soul yearned toward him, and he addressed himself to him with new considerations. Failing in appeals to Hobab's self interest, he resorted to other arguments. "And he said, Leave us not, I pray thee; forasmuch as thou knowest how we are to encamp in the wilderness; and thou mayest be to us instead of eyes." Then he renewed his promise: "And it shall be, if thou go with us, yea, it shall be that what goodness the Lord shall do unto us, the same will we do unto thee."

This persuasion succeeded. One consideration which prevailed with Hobab was, the prospect of usefulness. "Thou knowest how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and thou mayest be to us instead of eyes." He was probably an Arab chief. He knew the wilderness, the best paths through it, where the wandering hordes had dug their wells, where woodlands grew for fuel, good places for encampments, and he knew the signs of the weather. It was eminent wisdom in Moses to do as he did. It affords instructive illustration of the use of means in connection with Divine decrees. For though the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night would guide and guard the host, Moses yet knew that God works by means, and helps those who help themselves; and therefore he sought to attach to him this native sheikh whose influence, whose knowledge, whose sagacity would be of wonderful service. Hobab seemed susceptible to good impressions when made by good reasons. It would be no great temporal gain to him to follow with that host through the wilderness, but the thought of being so useful as he evidently could, gratified him, and in part prevailed with him.

Now this is one of two considerations which we would urge upon you. There are those whom we would persuade to join with us in the Christian life by just this motive; the good which you will do, the service which you will render to the church of God. There are some of you whose influence

in the community, if you should become truly pious, would be very great, and no one whose influence God may not make of great use to him who "took David from the sheepfold; he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance." If you should throw your energies into the cause of Christ, one and another would feel it, and nothing could more effectually plead with them to do likewise. Your children, your associates in business, many and many a friend who has his eye on you and will turn when you turn, and thinks it safe to do as you do, would come into the kingdom of God. Then what joy would be in earth and Heaven at your conversion. The Church of Christ would rejoice to see you in her fold, in her meetings for prayer. What would we not give to hear you pray in our meetings, to look upon you as you exclaim, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul." What joy would there be in Heaven as they say of you, Behold he prayeth!

If churches had great wealth, and could procure with it the real conversion to God, and the entire consecration to Christ of members of their congregations, no sum however great, would begin to compare with the good which those converts could do to the church and to the world, nor with the evil which they will do by living and dying unconverted, nor with the loss they would themselves sustain.

Here is a mother — yes, an unconverted mother : if she would consecrate herself and her children to her Saviour and theirs, she might confer lasting benefits on the Redeemer and his people. When Doddridge's mother taught her son Scripture truths from the fire-place tiles, she could not have conjectured that he would one day write the hymn beginning, "O happy day that fixed my choice." Or John Newton's faithful mother, dying when her son was but seven years old, that he would write, "Glorious things of thee are spoken, Zion, city of our God ;" of that other hymn : "Day of Judgment, day of wonders." Here is a son, a daughter, whose conversion would create influences which likewise may be felt to the ends of the earth. To every one, even the child, we say, The Lord hath need of thee. We ask you to consider if you can ever have a proposal made to you by the world, which involves so much usefulness as this offer of ours. Think seriously of this : My God and my Saviour calls me to be his follower, and promises to make me useful, and identify my name and my destiny with his. What else should I live for ? What will be the end of all my gain, if I lose my soul ? What though I am the chief among men, and Jesus Christ does not confess me before his Father and before his angels ? "For he seeth that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person, and leave their wealth to others." The Duke of Wellington's titles filled the sixth part of a col-

umn in one of our newspapers. I wonder if he was able to say of Christ, in dying :

“Then shall he own my worthless name,
Before his Father's face;
And in the new Jerusalem,
Appoint my soul a place.”

“And did not minister unto thee.” These are six words in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, which if applicable to him in his relation to Christ, would spread a pall as large as midnight over all his titles. Whatever we do to Christ, and to his cause and to his people, from heartfelt love to Christ, is all which will stand, all which will be rewarded, and for everything else, you must have your reward only in this world; but it cannot bribe your way to Heaven, or procure a look of love and approbation from Christ. We need you. The cause of Christ needs you. Some of you are wanted to manage the affairs of Christian benevolence; we need some to be active, useful private members of the church of Christ; we need all for their godly, prayerful lives and example, and God only can measure the good which you can do and will do, if you are a devoted servant of your Saviour. Leave us not, I pray thee. But not to go decidedly with us is to leave us.

“And it shall be, if thou go with us, yea, it shall be that what goodness the Lord shall do unto us, the same will we do unto thee!” Such was the

second consideration, and that which prevailed with Hobab. That it did prevail and how it was fulfilled we learn from the Scripture history. "And the children of the Kenite, Moses' father-in-law, went up out of the city of palm trees with the children of Judah,"—that is, with the foremost tribe,— "into the wilderness of Judah, which lieth in the south or Arad." * After Moses had prevailed with Hobab, and he had gone with Israel, Balaam came and uttered his marvellous words, among them these: "And he looked on the Kenites and said, Strong is thy dwelling-place, and thou puttest thy nest in a rock; nevertheless the Kenite shall be utterly wasted until Asshur shall carry thee away captive." And thus it came to pass. From their rocky habitations in Arabia Petræa, the Assyrians took them and led them away captives; but lo! the hosts of Israel have entered Canaan, and in the banner tribe of Judah, under the standard of Judah's Lion, is Hobab's family, whom it would seem Hobab had gathered with him into the number of God's covenant people: for not satisfied with being there himself, he has brought his relatives into the family of the living God, and God has given them an inheritance with beloved Judah. Heber, the husband of Jael, who slew Sisera, was a descendant of Hobab; as some say were also that remarkable people, the

* Judges 1:16.

Rechabites. All this while, if he had at last declined the invitation of Moses, his people would have been captives in war to the Assyrians. Thus whatever promise the ministers of Christ make to you with the sanction of Christ, a faithful and unchanging God will ratify and fulfil it to you and your seed forever.

But this was not all. In after years some of these Kenites seem to have gone forth among the Gentiles. For when Saul went to destroy Amalek we read, "And Saul said unto the Kenites, Go, depart, get you down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them; for ye showed kindness to all the children of Israel when they came up out of Egypt."* Here is mercy, remembered for the descendants of this man who, that he might serve God by serving his people, became a stranger in the earth and a sojourner. Thus no eye can see the end of the blessings which God will do to you, if you with cheerfulness, and with sacrifice if need be, and with all your soul and strength, consecrate yourself to him. In Israel's victories, prosperity and deliverances, Hobab and his descendants always shared, and thus it came to pass that what goodness the Lord did to Israel, the same did Israel unto them.

And now, in conclusion, we will tell what good we expect that the Lord will do unto us if we are truly his people. We expect that he will make us

* 1 Samuel, 15: 6.

useful in this world. We shall meet in Heaven those who, by what they say to us of our influence in their salvation, will make us happier than all the kings of the earth. We expect that he will deliver us from every evil work, and will preserve us unto his heavenly kingdom. We expect a peaceful dying bed, "as soft as downy pillows are," and such as all the ministrations of wealth and luxury cannot give; no cries for help; no forebodings of hell; no stupid submission, the silence that precedes a convulsion in nature; we expect to be carried by ministering angels to Heaven; we expect that Jesus will welcome us into Heaven, and confess us before his Father and before his angels; we expect to be in Heaven, looking forward to the great judgment day, while the wicked in hell tremble at the thought of the resurrection, and after this the judgment, and after this more of hell by the confinement of the devil and his angels with them to that abyss. This is what we expect to escape, and be with Christ, when all his saints come in the clouds of Heaven to receive their risen bodies at their graves, and whole families of us, like constellations, to rise together, and enter into the joy of our Lord, and spend eternity in the perfect enjoyment of God. All this we expect as much as we expect to die: for we know whom we have believed, and are persuaded that he is able to keep that which we have committed unto him against that day.

And now will you but go with us, it shall come to pass that not a joy, not a deliverance, not a blessing which God bestows on us but you shall also possess. The Bible will be yours. All that God and the Saviour are to us, God and the Saviour shall be to you. We wish you then to make up your mind whether you will be a Christian, in view of all these considerations. It is for you to decide. God will never make you a Christian without your consent. You will seem to take the first step. God does not want involuntary obedience, but intelligent and willing hearts, and if you conclude to-day to be a Christian, you will go not to us, but first of all to him, and repent and give him your heart. You will go alone in prayer. You will confess your sins, you will seek forgiveness in Christ, you will give your soul into his hands, and all you have and are to his service. You will be a new creature, and the greatest gift which ever passed from one friend to another you will make, and that is your precious soul to Jesus, your infinite Friend, and the greatest gift which Heaven can make will be made to you, for the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

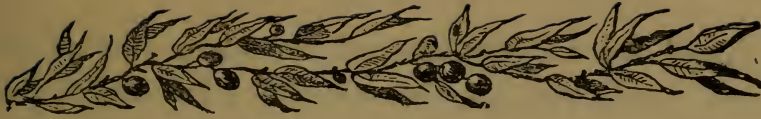
Every one here will now make answer to this invitation ; every one will go, or refuse. Great consequences wait on your choice. We may not again make, you may not again have this offer. Your decision to-day may be worth Heaven. Consider

then, Will you be a Christian? Will you be foolish, or wise; a servant of Christ, or still and forever an enemy; useful, or worse than useless; appear at his right hand, or at his left; come, or depart; sing, or wail? You are entrusted with a question whose decision you may never cease to feel in your eternal existence. Read the text, and think of this Kenite as to-day in Heaven, and all in consequence of this one decision. There was a woman, who made just such a decision to cast in her lot with God's people, and the consequence was, she stepped directly into the line of Christ's ancestry; for Ruth was the grandmother of Jesse, who was the father of David, and the son of David was David's Lord. Oh, what consequences oftentimes wait on our decision where God and religion are concerned! Consent with Hobab, who sings to-day the song of Moses and the Lamb, and let Ruth's words express to the Church of God your choice: "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for where thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also if aught but death," — nay, if even death, — "part you and me."

"Once more we ask you in his name,
For yet his love remains the same;

Say, will you to Mount Zion go,
Say, will you have this Christ, or no;
Say, will you leave those glittering toys,
And share with us eternal joys ?
Or must we leave you bound to hell,
And must we say — a long farewell ? ”

We shall not cease to follow you with these invitations till we have the same reason which Naomi had for ceasing to plead. “ When she saw that she was steadfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her.” “ And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come.”



FEBRUARY.

FIFTH SABBATH AFTERNOON.



THE MYSTERIES OF RELIGION.

“Such knowledge is too wonderful for me: it is high, I can not attain unto it.”—PSALM 139: 6.

THE knowledge here referred to is the omniscience of God. While the Psalmist says it is too wonderful to be understood, no doubts are expressed, no difficulties trouble his mind. He dwells on the omniscience of God with mingled love and awe; illustrates it, draws practical inferences from it. The mystery does not seem to offend him, it does not stimulate his pride, does not excite vain-glorious efforts to explain it. He states the plain and simple truth with regard to the mysterious subject; he bows humbly and reverently before it, and then goes on to use it with devotional feelings, for instruction.

Could we contemplate all the mysteries of religion in this manner, they would be fruitful of the highest practical benefit; but when we regard and treat them contrary to this example, they become stumbling blocks, give rise to profitless and vexatious speculation and controversy, and are occasion for unbelief which may even prove fatal to the soul.

1. It is to be supposed that there would be mysteries in religion.

The natural world abounds with them on every hand. Familiar to us and subservient to our comfort, and many of them essential to our existence, their incomprehensibleness has ceased to trouble the ordinary mind, and even when philosophers search after their causes and abandon the effort in despair, they still accept the mystery.

We are a mystery to ourselves. Nowhere in the heavens, earth, or seas, is there a greater wonder, a more profound mystery, a phenomenon more curious and interesting than the animation of the human body by the immaterial soul. Are *we* so full of mysteries? Paul's argument on Mars' Hill against idols applies to this case. "Forasmuch, then, as we are the offspring of God," we may suppose that the Godhead is incomprehensible; why should we understand the nature of God, when we are a mystery to ourselves; why should his plans and purposes all be plain to us, when we cannot understand our own way? Why must we demand

to know everything concerning him and his doings, when in our own familiar business, we know not what a day may bring forth?

II. I propose to consider some of the principal things in religion which must of necessity be mysteries.

The being of God is the first and the greatest of all mysteries. While nothing has such self-evident proofs as the being of God, nothing is so pre-eminently past finding out. Not to dwell at large on this, we need only consider that the being of God without any beginning, without any cause out of himself, contradicts all our experience. Everything we see had a cause; our immortal souls had a beginning. Before this dread mystery, the eternity of God, we stand in awe; any attempt to conceive how it could be, makes the mind swoon; we fear the loss of reason; we come away from the contemplation satisfied that we are of yesterday, and know nothing; while in our own selves and in everything about us we see proofs of an intelligent, divine first cause. He who made our minds must be himself a mind; every house is builded by some man. The ten-inch globe hanging from the wall of an astronomer, made an atheist who came into his room ask why it was there; and when the astronomer, obeying the advice of the wise man with respect to the way of answering a fool, (for this man had said in his heart, There is no God), replied, "It came there of itself." The atheist

hardly needed to be asked, as his friend did ask him, how this planet, the great globe itself, had no creator, when the atheist would not believe that a little sphere had tied itself to a ceiling. Yet while the being of God is so manifest from his works that the heathen are without excuse, he who attempts to explain the mystery at once becomes a fool, as really as he who says, there is no God.

If the existence of God be a mystery, who will dare say what mysteries his being contains, or if any such mysteries are indicated by revelation, can there be greater presumption than for man to say, this or that is impossible ; this contradicts reason ? Everything in the nature of God which is palpably obvious, is nevertheless above and beyond reason. Never, surely, need we be troubled by any mystery in God, or reject it because of its incomprehensibility so long as we believe that he is everywhere present at one and the same time. Voices of prayer are at this moment ascending to God around the globe. Men upon the great deep everywhere, do not hesitate to cry to him in their distress, feeling, no doubt, that God is there. Yet who of them can explain how God can hear their cry, and at the same moment hear and help those on the other side of the globe ; and rule in the armies of Heaven, and watch every insect in every sunbeam of every world in all places of his domain ? Who will stumble at any alleged mystery in the nature of God, if he can accept this truth which, were it

not of practical use, would have offended reason and excited opposition when first propounded to us, as much as anything which has ever been declared concerning God.

As the being of God must necessarily contain mysteries, so must his administration, both in his providence and his grace. For example, his perfect foreknowledge of all that will ever take place will raise the question, how he can command, with promises and threatenings; how he can justly reward or punish, seeing that he hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass. Thus one of the perfections of God could be represented as a great misfortune, incapacitating him from being the governor of the universe. But will it be any better to have a God who is short sighted? All will answer, No. Who, then, will foresee, and defend against accidents? Let him have infinite knowledge, and let it extend to the number of the hairs of our heads. Let him with infinite wisdom so fix everything, that he or his government shall not suffer disaster. But if he does this, where is human liberty? How can he justly reward or punish? Men have puzzled themselves to reconcile these things for ages; and we are brought no nearer to an understanding of them. We accept the mystery of God's infinite knowledge; we believe the perfect responsibility of man; the consistency of the two is one of the mysteries of religion.

The existence of sin and evil under the government of God, is another mystery. The future punishment of the wicked is a mystery. We can see that to sin against God must be an infinite evil, and penalties must always express the evil of the crime. The punishment of sin is required to be, according to all our modes of reasoning, infinite, — that is, in this case, without end. This is fortified by the consideration of all that has been done to save men, which if trodden under foot by them, or neglected, after full and fair warning of the consequences, will make it eminently just, that they should never be forgiven. Persisting also in sinning hereafter, their punishment, as we can see, should always continue. It is easy, moreover, to see how the voluntary sin and the punishment of some, and that perhaps a few, compared with the population of the universe, will be the means of sustaining the government of God. Still, while we find the future punishment of the wicked declared in the same terms as the happiness of the righteous, and the heathen are pronounced without excuse, we feel that the judgments of God are a great deep. Who will say that the God who made it consistent with justice to save a part of the race through the atonement, could not by some expedient have saved all; and who will dare to give the reason why some are left to their chosen way, and perish? If the heaven above and the earth beneath, and the heart of kings is unsearchable, who

will sit in judgment upon the ways of God, or suffer himself to do anything more than assert whatever God declares, whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear.

There are mysteries in the grace of God.

The mysteries in the grace of God relate to the propitiation made for sin, and man's recovery from it, and personal election. Questions may be asked which never can be answered as to the atonement, and regenerating grace, effectual calling, and perseverance in holiness unto the end. Christians who receive these truths divide into sects, according to the views they take of these mysteries, holding that their respective explanations are most agreeable to the Word of God, which by its phraseology, permitting good men to differ, shows that there are limits to human knowledge, and great room for humility and charity, along the borders where excessive light masters our feeble vision.

III. The mysteries of religion properly received, are of the highest practical use.

One use of them is, to prepare our minds to receive knowledge.

The way to receive knowledge is set before us in the method which the God of nature has instituted in the trustful, inquiring, submissive spirit of childhood. God has ordained that when we begin to learn, we shall be inquisitive, earnest, and confiding children. If children were disposed to ques-

tion and dispute everything, and set up reason to decide as to the possibility of what we tell them, there would be slow progress in knowledge; the employment and the pleasure of relating and explaining things to their wondering eyes and ears would cease. With a credulity which is touching, and an implicit faith which is disturbed only by curiosity, they form their ideas, they arrive at understanding. This is the way in which we must sit and wait, when God teaches us; for never did we tell a child anything which required a greater stretch of faith, than the truth of the eternal existence of God, and his being everywhere present. Our Saviour showed us that this is the way to learn wisdom. He showed this not by word only; he used a beautiful sign to impress it. "And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them." The child, of course, was one whose looks would give force to the Saviour's illustration; a meek-eyed, loving, confiding, yet wondering child, his face attempered with beauty by the emotions which played over it; and as he sat there trusting that the Saviour's motives in thus making him prominent in the crowd were kind, Jesus said, "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven." "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." The same submissive, docile, confiding temper you must have whenever God teaches

you, or you cannot be saved. Now what can be better suited to create this spirit within us than these mysteries? If we begin our inquiries respecting religion, feeling that we are babes in knowledge, and asking God to teach us, "the meek he will guide in judgment; the meek he will teach his way."

This life is not the only period for acquiring knowledge. There are, unquestionably, mysteries in God which eternity will not fully explain. It would be a calamity should he cease to be past finding out, and there should be no more above and beyond us to excite and reward faith. Only a few mysteries are disclosed here, in kindness to our weak natures. No doubt we shall find mysteries in ourselves that will far surpass all difficulties with regard to free agency; and mysteries in God which will leave every present doctrine concerning him among the rudiments of knowledge. Suppose, however, that we begin in this world and set up our reason against these mysteries, reject everything which we cannot explain, or which does not square with our notions; poorly fitted shall we be to enter upon that world where increasing light will reveal things deeper and darker still, not to perplex and pain us, but to make us cover our faces, and worship. The seraphim in the temple had more wings to cover themselves withal than in flying. "Each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his

feet, and with twain he did fly." We are on probation now as to our reason as well as our hearts. Brett-Schneider says: "I will never believe what I cannot understand, is the secret of all unbelief." If reason does not bow her knees before her God, we are not his children, and cannot enter into the kingdom of Heaven. So that one great use of mysteries in religion is to prepare us, by the state of mind and heart which they may excite in us, for present and endless progress in knowledge. Faith knows more than reason.

Another use of mysteries is, to deepen our reverence and gratitude for revelation.

When this Bible lifts the veil a little, and lets us see how much there is to know which we cannot understand, we perceive in its plainness and simplicity, its fulness and sufficiency, in its silence which is as wise and wonderful as its revelations, in its minuteness, and its large compass, occasion for unceasing adoration and praise. It is a broad land where snow-capped summits are lost in Heaven, where the blue ocean makes an ever receding horizon, and still with this grandeur all about us, we dwell among vineyards, and under fig trees, and among navigable rivers and streams, in green pastures and by still waters. You will always find that those who believe and love the mysteries of religion have a proportionable love for the Bible: they are childlike, and so are best fitted to

enjoy its teachings; they are struck with awe by the mysteries, and therefore cleave with greater joy and gratitude to the things which are made plain. Each attests, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." But you will always find that those that reject the mysteries of religion undervalue, and, to different degrees, discard the Bible.

If the mysteries of religion trouble us, let us put our minds and hearts to that school where Job, perplexed and overwhelmed by the mysteries of God's providence, was sent, — a school where God became the teacher. God told him to gird up his loins like a man, as though in all his profound speculations he had been a weak, puling child before. But what lessons did God appoint him? The first was this: "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?" The subjects of the other lessons were these: The morning, the sea, the snow, the hail, Pleiades, lightnings, the wild goats, the peacock, the war horse, behemoth, and leviathan. God intimated that Job should first explain these, and then it would be time for other things. And when Job had considered such hard lessons, he relented, and his heart was broken, and he said, "I know that thou canst do everything, and that no thought can be withholden from thee. Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? Therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which

I knew not. Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak. I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear ; but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

There is great compass to this truth : "Believe, and thou shalt be saved."



Messrs. D. Lothrop and Company have assumed the publication of the following works of Rev. N. Adams, D. D., of Boston. The plates of the first three here named were burned on the press of Gould & Lincoln, in the great fire of November, 1872, having just been re-stereotyped to correspond in size and shape with the other books by this author. By the kindness of a few of the author's friends they are again re-stereotyped, the whole being made uniform, viz.,

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